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GARDENS ILLUSTRATED

MARCH 2013

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Planting ideas for stylish pots

Best plants for March

Fergus Garrett's seasonal favourites

Great design ideas for low-maintenance gardens

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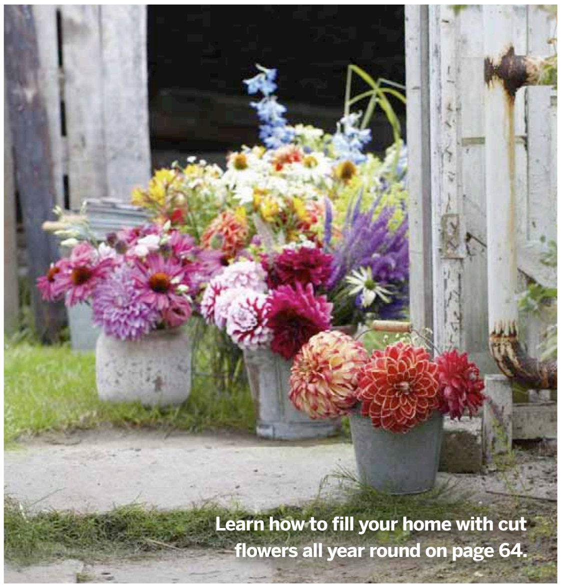
editor's letter

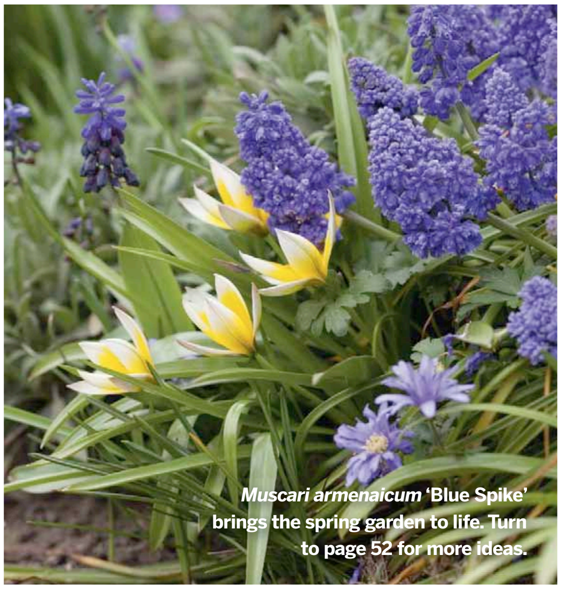
After much thought, I've decided to turn over half of my vegetable plot to growing cut flowers this year. I get such pleasure from bringing home-grown flowers indoors and really want to experiment with a wider range of annuals and biennials. I also want to work out how to ensure I've got something lovely in the garden to snip pretty much all year round. In anticipation of the growing year, I asked gardener Esther McMillan for her expert advice. Esther, who developed a remarkable cutting garden at Kelmarsh Hall in Northamptonshire for many years, has recently set up her own company specialising in English-grown cut flowers with the unforgettable name of Gladys Plum and Her Amazing Flower Orchestra. Spring flowers are among my favourites and particularly woodland plants, many of which come into their own at this time of year. Professor Nigel Dunnett – one of the planting design consultants for the Olympic Park – has spent many years studying how to integrate woody plants with perennials. Inspired by ancient coppiced woodlands and the nuttery at Sissinghurst in Kent – one of the finest examples of naturalistic woodland flora in the world – Nigel has written a feature for us analysing why they are so successful and suggests a selection of spring plants that would create a similar effect. I just wish I had enough space to plant a little nuttery too. I hope you enjoy the issue.

Juliet

You can get the latest editions of GARDENS ILLUSTRATED as a digital version to view on your iPad. Available via the App Store.



Learn how to fill your home with cut flowers all year round on page 64.



***Muscari armenaicum* 'Blue Spike' brings the spring garden to life. Turn to page 52 for more ideas.**

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Plantsman and head gardener at Great Dixter in East Sussex.

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VISIONS / GAP PHOTOS, SIBYLLE PIETREK

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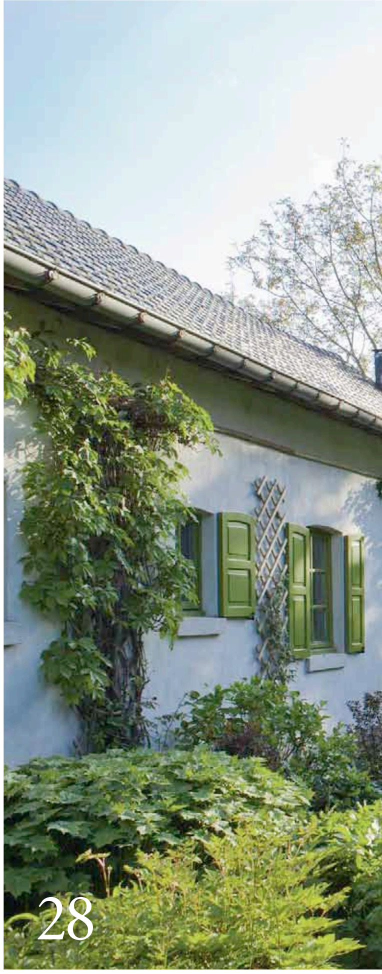
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COVER IMAGE

Narcissus 'Minnow' photographed by Sabina Rüber **See feature on page 64**

on the cover

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NURSERYMAN'S FAVOURITES Fergus Garrett chooses his plants for March on page **16**
LOW-MAINTENANCE GARDENING Designer Annie Guilfoyle has the tricks of the trade – see page **88**
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ROBERT MABIC / GAP PHOTOS

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- Reader offers include a competition to win a mower and a scarifier from Hayter*, to win a 1kg tube of GroChar BioChar soil improver*, or you can get 15% off Chiltern Seeds* – see page 106

* Offer applies to UK customers only.

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USA/CANADA GARDENS ILLUSTRATED, PO Box 669, Selmer, TN 38375 USA.

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✉ GARDENS ILLUSTRATED, Immediate Media Company Bristol Limited, Tower House, Fairfax Street, Bristol BS1 3BN.

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Formerly BBC Magazines, Origin Publishing and Magicalia

THIS MAGAZINE IS OWNED AND PUBLISHED BY IMMEDIATE MEDIA COMPANY BRISTOL

Standard subscription rates: UK £47.88 per annum; Eire and Europe £49.97; rest of the world £59.97. Distribution Frontline, Peterborough. US distribution Source IPD/Speedimpex. Email intlquery@seymour.co.uk Printed in the UK by William Gibbons Ltd. GARDENS ILLUSTRATED (ISSN 0968-8920) (USPS 015-608) March 2013 is published monthly by Immediate Media Company Bristol, 9th Floor, Tower House, Fairfax Street, Bristol BS1 3BN, UK. Distributed in the US by Evergreen Marketing, 116 Ram Cat Alley, Suite 201, Seneca, SC 29678-3263. Periodicals postage paid at Seneca, SC and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to GARDENS ILLUSTRATED, PO Box 669, Selmer, TN 38375-0669. Unsolicited manuscripts, artwork or transparencies are accepted on the understanding that the publishers incur no liability for their storage or return. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and may not be reproduced without permission. The GARDENS ILLUSTRATED cover is printed on 250gsm Respecta Gloss produced in Belgium by Burgo; the china clay filler is supplied from the UK. The Immediate Media Company Limited is working to ensure that all of its paper is sourced from well-managed forests. This magazine can be recycled for use in newspapers and packaging. Please remove any gifts, samples or wrapping and dispose of it at your local collection point. All prices are correct at time of going to press.

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Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulation. ISSN 0968-8920

AppStudio

ABC Jan-June 2012 35,701

contributors

HOWARD SOOLEY

ESTHER MCMILLAN

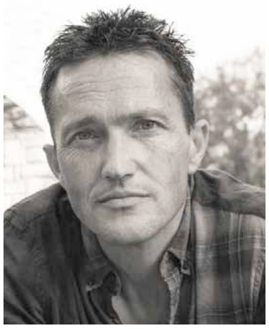
Esther is a former head gardener and journalist, now turning her skills to setting up a small cut flower business, Gladys Plum and her Amazing Flower Orchestra. Turn to page 64 to see her guide to how to get cut flowers all year round.

"Picking home grown cut flowers fills me with a mix of childish glee and covetous lust. It's the best fun!"

ROBERT MABIC

Robert is a Slovenian photographer, based in small village of Naklo, with particular interest in photographing gardens. His work is published regularly in Slovenian newspapers and magazines. You can see his photos of Dina Deferme's garden on page 28.

"Dina is well known garden designer in Belgium and I really enjoyed photographing her garden."



JONATHAN BUCKLEY

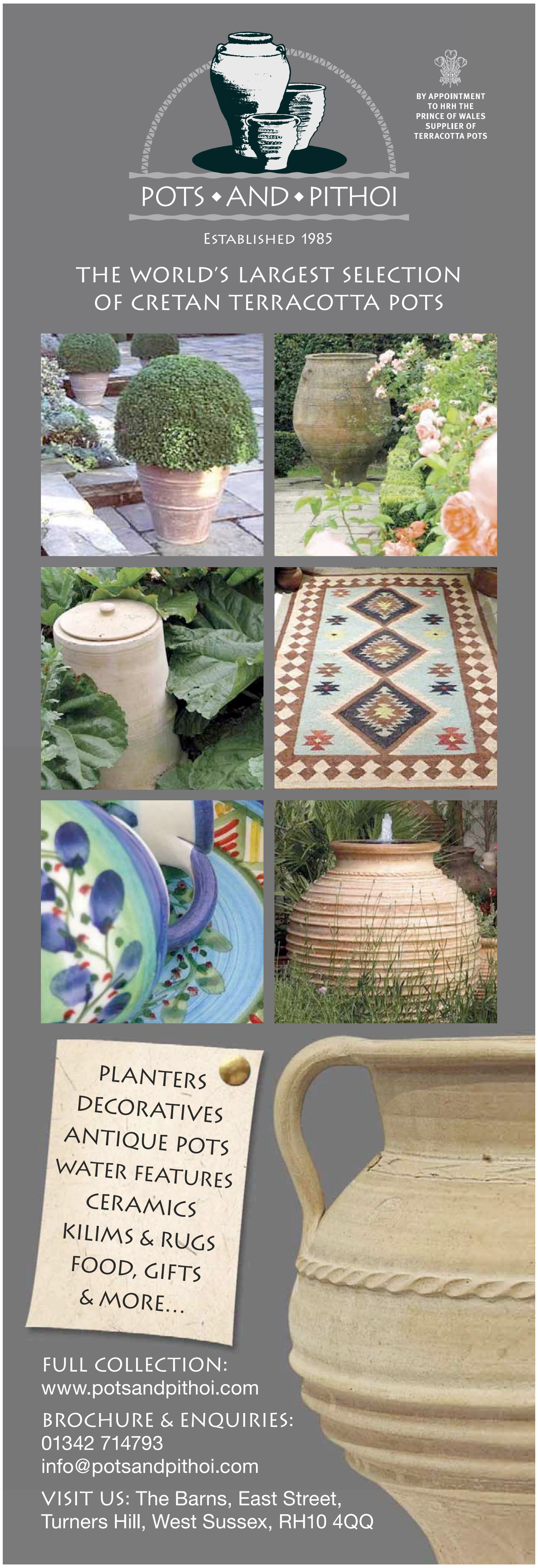
Multi-award-winning photographer Jonathan specialises in photographing flowers, gardens and food, all on location and almost always using available natural light. Go to page 60 to see his work on the nuttery at Sissinghurst.

"The nuttery at Sissinghurst is my favourite part of the garden and early spring is the best time to see it."

BRIAN MATHEW

Brian worked for many years at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew as a plant taxonomist and bulb specialist. He has written several books on bulbs including *Crocus* and *Iris*. He reviews the fascinating genus *Erythronium* on page 42.

"These are surely among the most elegant of all bulbous plants – in fact one rare species is called E. elegans.*"*



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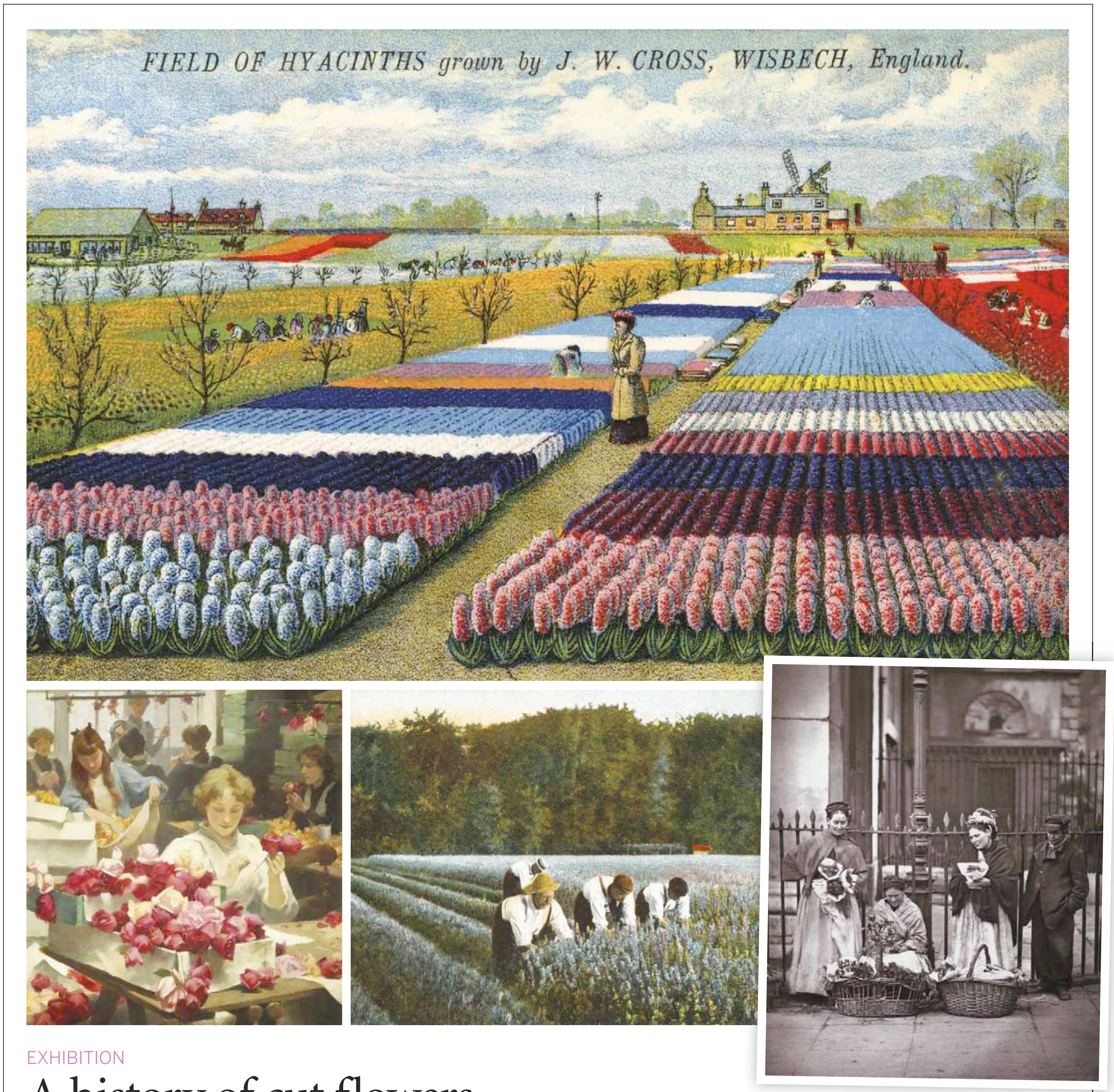
Dig in

News, Gardening talent, Nurseryman's favourites, Gardener's notes & Shopping

NEWS COMPILED BY SORREL EVERTON


FIELD OF HYACINTHS grown by J. W. CROSS, WISBECH, England.

PICTURE BOTTOM LEFT FLOWER MAKERS, SAMUEL MELTON FISHER, 1896; NATIONAL MUSEUMS LIVERPOOL: WALKER ART GALLERY; ALL OTHER IMAGES C. GARDEN MUSEUM

EXHIBITION

A history of cut flowers

The UK's cut flower industry is worth over £1.5 billion, with occasions such as Valentine's Day and Mothering Sunday (10 March) bringing bouquets to the fore at this time of year. 'Floriculture – Flowers, Love and Money', a new exhibition at the Garden Museum in London, tracks the history of cut flowers from the 17th century, when Covent Garden dominated the trade, through to the present day. Using archive images (a selection of which are shown above) and film, the exhibition considers the importance flowers play to key life events, such as weddings and funerals, while also looking at changing fashions in cut flowers and horticulture's impact as a worldwide business, 14 February-28 April 2013. Tel 020 7401 8865, www.gardenmuseum.org.uk

READER
LECTURE

Gardens Illustrated Lecture

With Piet Oudolf and Jinny Blom

Join us for this year's inspirational GARDENS ILLUSTRATED talk at the Royal Geographical Society in London, Tuesday 21 May, 2013

We are delighted to be hosting once again the GARDENS ILLUSTRATED lecture at the Royal Geographical Society in London. This year our guest speakers are garden designer and nurseryman Piet Oudolf from the Netherlands, renowned internationally for his distinctive planting schemes, seen most recently in The High Line park in New York. Joining him will be Jinny Blom, award-winning garden designer, whose sumptuous plantings blend the formal and informal to romantic effect.

Chaired by Tim Richardson, garden design critic and chairman of the Chelsea Fringe, the lecture promises to be informative and entertaining and a rare opportunity to see these two names comparing and contrasting their work.

This year, alongside standard tickets, we are offering 300 Premium tickets. Premium tickets include a glass of Laurent-Perrier champagne on arrival, plus access to priority seating. Book early to avoid disappointment. Subscribers receive a discount on the price of tickets.

GARDENS ILLUSTRATED reserves the right to replace the speakers with other speakers of equal stature in the unlikely event that either of them are unable to attend. Please let us know when booking of any special access requirements. Tickets are non-refundable. Driving to the lecture is not advised. Nearest London Underground station is South Kensington. There is a cash bar.
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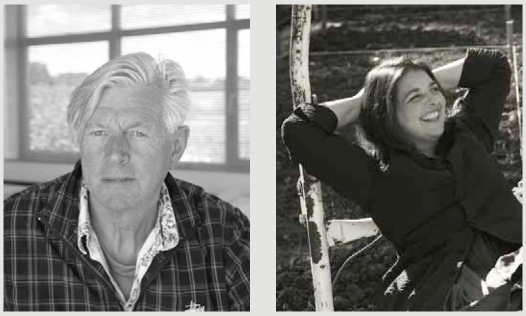

WALTER HERFST, CHARLIE HOPKINSON

Lecture Details

- **Date** Tuesday 21 May, 2013
- **Venue** Royal Geographical Society, 1 Kensington Gore, South Kensington, London SW7 2AR

Order of Events

- **5.45pm** Doors open for Premium tickets only. Laurent-Perrier champagne served
- **6.15pm** Doors open for standard tickets. (Cash bar available.)
- **7pm** Lecture begins
- **8.30pm** Q&A session concludes
- **9pm** Doors close

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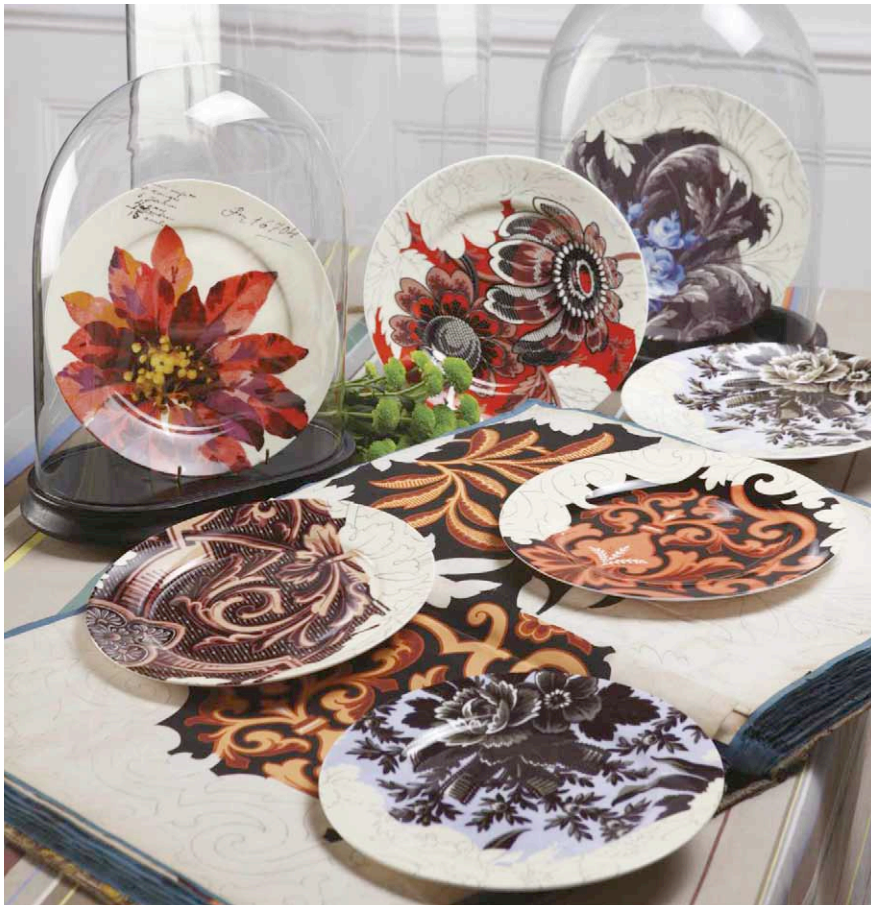

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EVENTS

Horatio's Garden talk

Garden and design experts are to give a series of talks at the Organic Gardens at Yeo Valley Family Farm in Somerset. Held in aid of the charity Horatio's Garden (the rehabilitation garden designed by Cleve West for the Southern Spinal Injuries Trust), the first two speakers are gardener and cook Sarah Raven (18 and 19 March), and landscape architect Kim Wilkie (26 April). Further talks take place later in the year with Cleve West, Bunny Guinness, Mark Diacono and the garden's head gardener James Cox. Details and booking information at www.ssit.org.uk/you-help-fundraising.php

COMPTON VERNEY

RESTORATION

Compton Verney

This month sees the re-opening to the public of the 18th-century chapel designed by 'Capability' Brown at Compton Verney in Warwickshire (now an art gallery). The chapel has been out of bounds for 23 years, but restoration work means that this rare example of Brown's architectural work now has a secured roof and ceiling, unblocked windows, electricity and new pews. The chapel is open to view from 23 March to 15 December. With Phase I completed, Compton Verney is now looking to raise further funds to complete the restoration. Tel 01926 645500, www.comptonverney.org.uk

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NEW CATALOGUE

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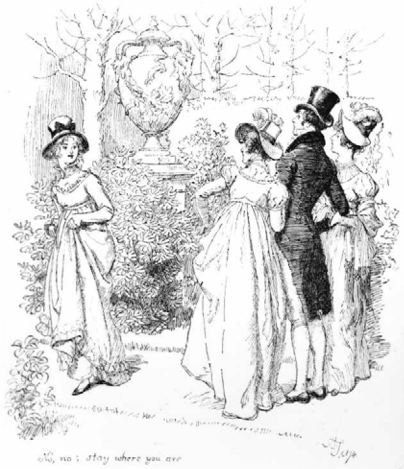
Chiltern Seeds is known for its unusual and specialist seeds for both flowers and vegetables. The 2013 catalogue includes some interesting new additions, such as Chiltern Seeds Twilight Mixed sweet peas, their own collection that combines darker-flowered cultivars such as 'Almost Black' (pictured). Or you could try *Dipsacus inermis*, a teasel without spines from the Himalayas. Turn to page 107 for a reader discount of 15% on all seeds bought. Tel 01491 824675, www.chilternseeds.co.uk


No, no; stay where you are

Garden meeting: engraved by Hugh Thompson as one of the illustrations for an early edition of *Pride and Prejudice*.

GARDEN HISTORY

Austen in the garden

This year sees the 200th anniversary of the publication of *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen's most popular title. Austen enthusiasts will be aware of the importance a garden setting has to many of her scenes, a subject explored, along with Austen's own garden enthusiasms and experiences, in a lunchtime talk at Painshill, Surrey. 'Gardens in the time of Jane Austen', 1pm, 21 March. Book in advance on 01932 868113, www.painshill.co.uk

Reader holidays

Take a garden-themed holiday this year with GARDENS ILLUSTRATED. These are exclusive tours led by garden experts and visiting an inspiring selection of international gardens – often by private invitation.

- **Ring o' Roses garden breaks**

A series of luxury weekend garden breaks take you to some of England's most inspiring gardens.
Gardens of East Anglia: 17-19 May, led by Noël Kingsbury;
Gardens of the Upper Cotswolds: 14-16 June, led by Helena Attlee;
Gardens of the Heart of Sussex: 12-14 July, led by David Wheeler.
Full details from Boxwood Tours.

- **Gardens of the Northern Dutch Provinces, 3-9 July.**

This tour takes in some of the best gardens and nurseries at the cutting edge of horticultural development, including a tour of Piet and Anja Oudolf's private garden.
Full details from Distant Horizons.

Bay Garden, Irish Garden Tour.

- **Irish Garden Tour, 23-26 September**

Visit the gardens of Dublin and the Wicklow Mountains in the company of Jimi Blake of Hunting Brook.
Full details from Boxwood Tours

- **Japan Garden Holiday, 12-23 November**

Discover the tranquil beauty and rich autumn colour of Kyoto and its surrounding garden attractions with your tour leader Helena Attlee.
Full details from Distant Horizons.

- **Contact details**

Distant Horizons Tel 0151 625 3425, www.distanthorizons.co.uk
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'NO, NO, STAY WHERE YOU ARE', ILLUSTRATION FROM 'PRIDE AND PREJUDICE' BY JANE AUSTEN, EDITION PUBLISHED IN 1894 (ENGRAVING), THOMSON, HUGH (1860-1920) / PRIVATE COLLECTION / THE BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY

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Stephane Lustig www.lustigoutdoordesign.co.uk
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The Diploma in Garden Design course provides a thorough training in garden design, enabling students to enter garden design at a professional level. It is an intensive year-long course, requiring commitment from you, but as such enables you achieve high standards in a relatively short time.

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The Inchbald School of Design gives careers advice, and students in the garden design school have been developing successful garden design careers for over 30 years.

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A two day a week vocational diploma course offers students simple paving to advanced step design, they will study the various skills needed to confidently design walls, fences, structures and water features together with lighting and irrigation. Students will also acquire the knowledge necessary to produce construction drawings.

Students are taken through the principles and practices of good business and also have the opportunity to set up as Sole Traders, with guidance, whilst on the course.

Online Courses

Dynamic and inspirational, these three-month part-time courses will guide you through the design process so that you can create your own garden or living space. With ongoing support and advice from a practising professional and backed by the expertly produced course materials, you will develop your design ideas to produce a scheme that meets your needs on a functional and aesthetic level.

Each course is made up of an online induction and 12 sessions. You study just one session a week. The course takes about four hours a week, but don’t be surprised if you become so engrossed in design that you end up spending more time than this.

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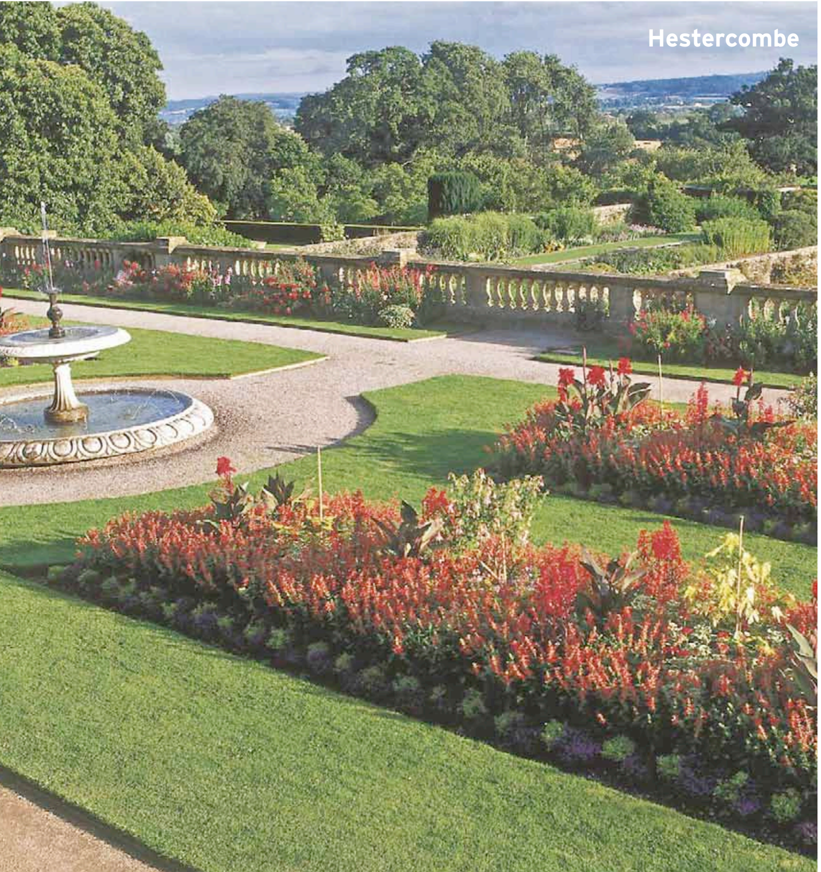
Hestercombe

The legacy of Gertrude Jekyll

Over the last hundred years few would doubt the great influence Gertrude Jekyll had on garden design. In her lifetime Jekyll was a prolific garden designer creating over 400 gardens; perhaps best remembered for her association with the architect Sir Edwin Lutyens and together they left an unrivalled gardening legacy.

Our tour stretches from the Home Counties of Kent, Sussex and Surrey, where she lived for most of her life at Munstead Wood, then crosses the southern counties of England and into the scenic West Country where many of her commissions are located.

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Douglas Mackay

Currently in his final year as a horticultural student at Pershore College, Douglas was chosen as the Institute of Horticulture's Young Horticulturist of the Year in 2012

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Earliest gardening memory Growing pelargoniums from seed aged about six and then watching as they were systematically demolished by caterpillars. To make the best of it, I then occupied myself counting which leaves had the most caterpillars on.

Who has inspired your career the most? My supervisor at the walled garden where I did work experience. I was struck by how she was always so happy even in the roughest weather doing the worst jobs. Her positive, can-do attitude was just completely infectious.

Three worthwhile tips for every gardener Listen to the old hands (you can learn so much), network with the like-minded as much as you can to kick start your career – everyone knows everyone in our industry – and lastly, tell everyone you meet that there is more to us all than just being 'people who play with plants'.

Dream plant destination I have always wanted to visit South Africa as it is full of beautiful, crazy plants, especially Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden.

Unsung hero of the plant world Nettles – they support wildlife such as butterfly and moth caterpillars (not the kind that demolish the garden!) and they indicate that the soil beneath is rich and nutritious. If I had to pick an allotment site, I'd go for one covered in nettles.

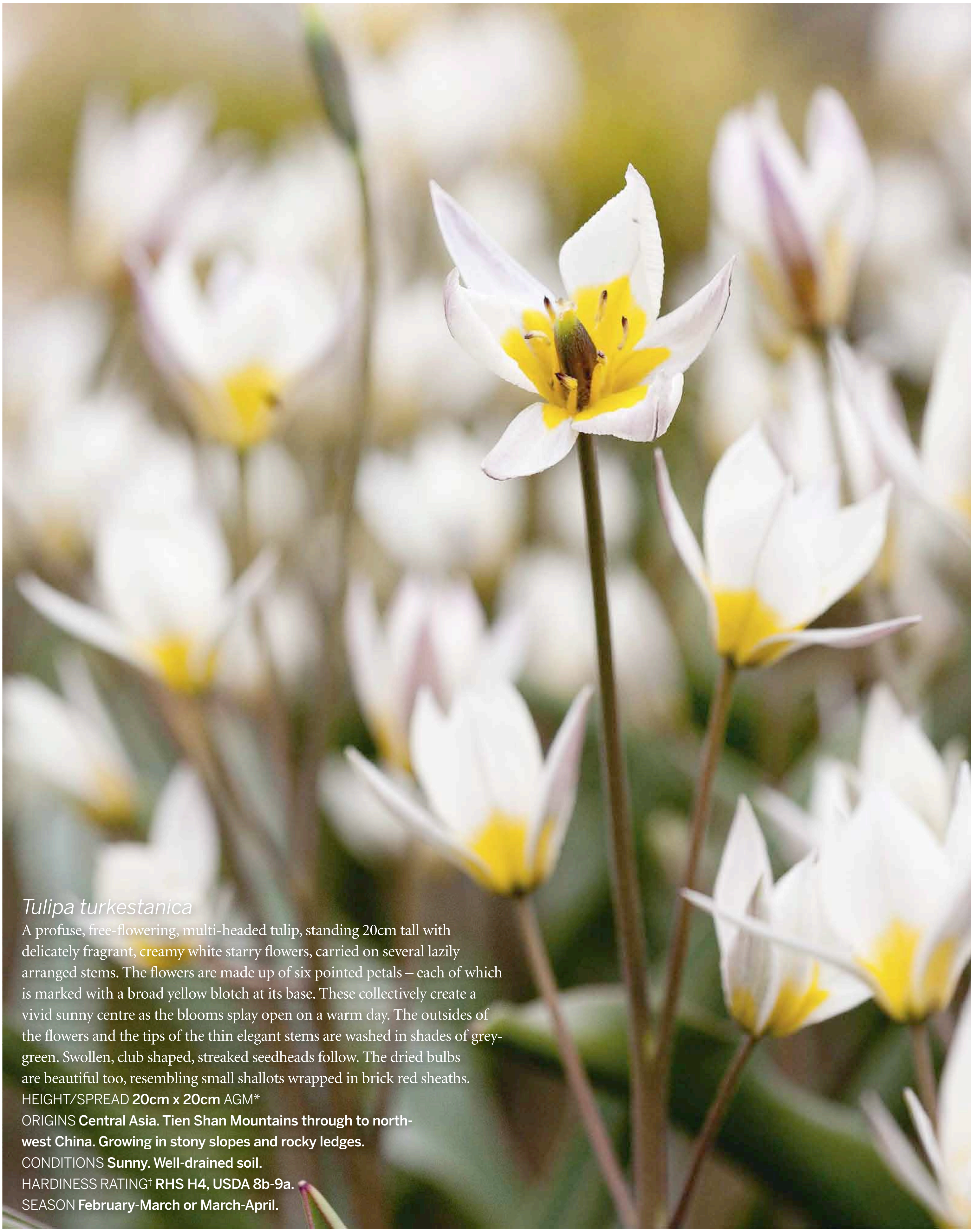
What principles have guided your attitude to horticulture I have always stood by the mantra that you get as much out of something as you put into it. If you apply yourself and do your best then you can achieve just as much in any career as a doctor or a lawyer.

What heartens you about our attitudes to horticulture today? As a production horticulturist, I think it's great that people are becoming more aware of where their fresh produce comes from and the importance of buying British to support growers all round the country trying to compete against imports.

Most embarrassing moment regarding a plant or your obsession with plants Laying turf on a show garden at 11pm the night before the judging at the Malvern Spring Gardening Show. We only had a light from someone's car and had to use touch for the rest of it. We were surprised that there weren't more gaps and bumps than there were when we went back in the morning!

- **Contact email address: douglasmackay@live.com**

SHOT ON LOCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL BOTANIC GARDEN



Tulipa turkestanica

A profuse, free-flowering, multi-headed tulip, standing 20cm tall with delicately fragrant, creamy white starry flowers, carried on several lazily arranged stems. The flowers are made up of six pointed petals – each of which is marked with a broad yellow blotch at its base. These collectively create a vivid sunny centre as the blooms splay open on a warm day. The outsides of the flowers and the tips of the thin elegant stems are washed in shades of grey-green. Swollen, club shaped, streaked seedheads follow. The dried bulbs are beautiful too, resembling small shallots wrapped in brick red sheaths.

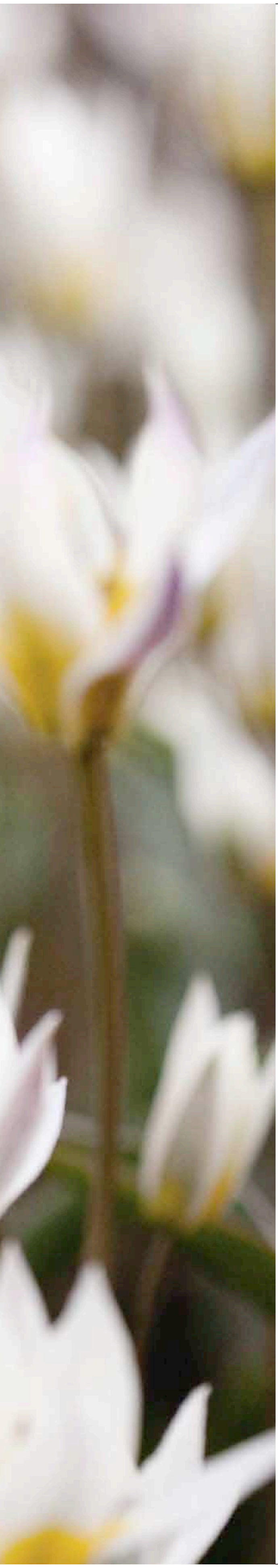
HEIGHT/SPREAD **20cm x 20cm** AGM*

ORIGINS **Central Asia. Tien Shan Mountains through to north-west China. Growing in stony slopes and rocky ledges.**

CONDITIONS **Sunny. Well-drained soil.**

HARDINESS RATING† **RHS H4, USDA 8b-9a.**

SEASON **February-March or March-April.**



March plants

Adding colour and zest to your garden this month is easier than you might think. Here are nine choices to consider

WORDS FERGUS GARRETT PHOTOGRAPHS SHARON PEARSON

Fergus Garrett is head gardener at Great Dixter in East Sussex. The nursery at Great Dixter stocks a wide range of interesting, garden-worthy plants. He also lectures, writes and serves on Royal Horticultural Society committees.

Euphorbia robbiae

Although common, this is still deserving of its place on this page. It colonises difficult spots in sun or shade with neat rosettes of dark green leaves tightly arranged in whorls. Bright lime green flowers push up in March and look presentable until late July, after which they need tidying up by cutting to the ground. Makes a fine foliage plant hobnobbing with ferns and marbled cyclamen leaves. Its acid flowers act as a catalyst to mauve aubretias, blue forget-me-nots, pale yellow primroses, and the burnt oranges of wallflowers.

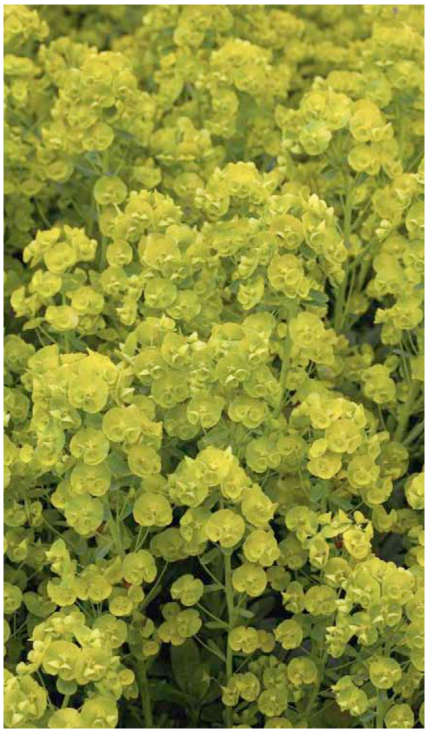
HEIGHT/SPREAD 55cm tall and infinitely spreading. AGM

ORIGINS Grows in oak and beech forest north west of Istanbul in Turkey.

CONDITIONS Sun or shade.

HARDINESS RATING RHS H4, USDA 8b-9a.

SEASON March to July.



JAN SMITH / GAP PHOTOS

Magnolia 'Galaxy'

Tulip-shaped buds of rich reddish purple open into fat goblet-shaped flowers revealing a white and pale-pink inside, highlighted by a protruding prehistoric cone of brown carpels and pink stamens. The flowers arrive before the leaves on this stark, grey-barked, single-stemmed, low hung tree. The shape becomes wider and more conical as its arching branches droop with age. The display is a sumptuous spectacle. The large oval leaves turn muddied yellow in autumn.

HEIGHT/SPREAD 8-10m x 4-8m. AGM

ORIGINS Bred in United States National Arboretum, Washington DC, in 1963.

CONDITIONS Sun or light shade in a sheltered position in moist and humus-rich soil. Avoid chalk.

HARDINESS RATING RHS H4, USDA 8b-9a.

SEASON March into April.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society

†Hardiness ratings given where available

Geranium maderense

The most exotic and spectacular of all the cranesbills, with impressive mounds of large deeply cut leaves standing 1m high. These are supported by thick fleshy stalks and a colossal trunk. Pink flowers streaked with magenta veins erupt from the centre on long hairy panicles forming a large dense bouquet. Plants take two to three years to flower from seed, and flowering takes several months with hundreds of individual blooms produced on each plant. Plants are monocarpic so death follows seeding. Tender in most parts of the UK but will perform in a container if given a rich living and large enough pot.

HEIGHT/SPREAD 1.5m x 1m. AGM

ORIGINS Madeira in subtropical forest.

CONDITIONS Sun or part shade.

HARDINESS RATING RHS H2-3, USDA 10a.

SEASON March to June.

Pulmonaria 'Diana Clare'

A first-class clump-forming lungwort with glittering long basal leaves 25cm long and covered in a silver wash. The leaf midrib and leaf edges remain a contrasting green. Produces clusters of shallowly lobed funnel-shaped flowers held in purple brown calyxes on elongated stems, which are decorated with small silver spotted stem leaves. The flowers open rosy purple and change colour to violet and violet blue. The whole plant is covered in bristly hairs. Benefits from a haircut after flowering.

HEIGHT/SPREAD 30cm x 40cm.

ORIGINS A seedling of *Pulmonaria longifolia* selected by Bob Brown of Cotswold Garden Flowers and named after his wife.

CONDITIONS Easy to grow but best in humus-rich, moist soil in semi or full shade.

HARDINESS RATING RHS H4, USDA 8b-9a.

SEASON Flowers March to April.

JOHN GLOVER / ALAMY

Erythronium tuolumnense

A vigorous, clump-forming Californian native now under threat in the wild due to excessive logging. Bulbs have pairs of unmarked, long and broad wavy-edged leaves that are clean and glossy green. From these sprout upright stems (30cm high) bearing nodding clear yellow star-like flowers that open wide to form glistening Turk's caps 4cm across. Each slender stem can hold several flowers, which individually hang down from gently curving branches. Has given rise to many popular hybrids such as 'Pagoda' and 'Sundisc'.

HEIGHT/SPREAD 30-50cm x 20cm. AGM

ORIGINS Sierra Nevada, California, growing at altitudes of 1,500-5,000m.

CONDITIONS Part shade in humus-rich moist soil.

HARDINESS RATING RHS H4, USDA 8b-9a.

SEASON March to April.

Places to visit

Fergus shares some of his favourite places to see plants at their best.

I was first taken on a tour of **the gardens of Devon and Cornwall** in 1986, by my tutor at Wye College, Tom Wright. The images of mammoth rhododendrons, magnolias, and camellias, with flowers of scintillating colours dripping off lichen-covered trunks, moss laden paths, and woodland bulbs, remain so vivid in my mind. **www.greatgardensofcornwall.co.uk, www.gardensofcornwall.com, www.gardenvisit.com**

CRISTIAN BARNETT

The RHS Great London plant fair.

The RHS Great London Plant Fair 26-27 March. The RHS shows at Vincent Square are always a treat with artistic displays from specialist nurseries and plenty of unusual plants available for purchase. I try and visit every show and am rarely disappointed. A good

Pachyphragma macrophyllum

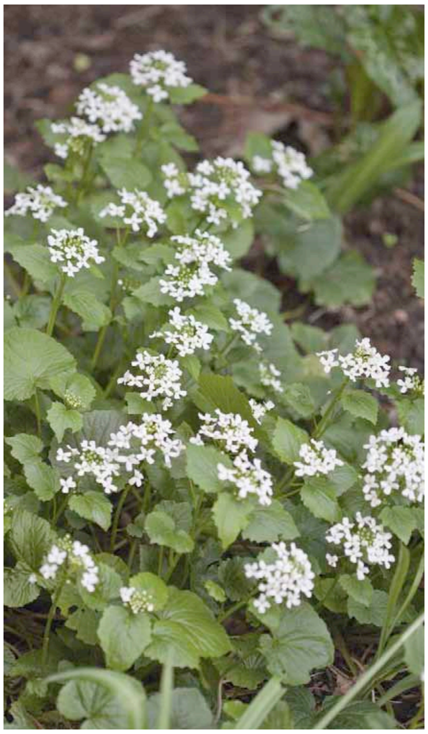
An easy-to-grow spreading perennial that makes low, gently undulating mounds covered in lively deep green heart-shaped leaves. These are scalloped and coarse-textured with a mosaic of ruffled deep veins. Four-petalled cruciform flowers, chalky white with faint streaks of green, are held in expanding clusters alongside white and green flower buds. The inflorescence is rounded yet flattened and held on stiff stems above the foliage. Copes well with shady situations even under an evergreen canopy. Spreads by creeping rhizomes and self-seeding. Grows on you.

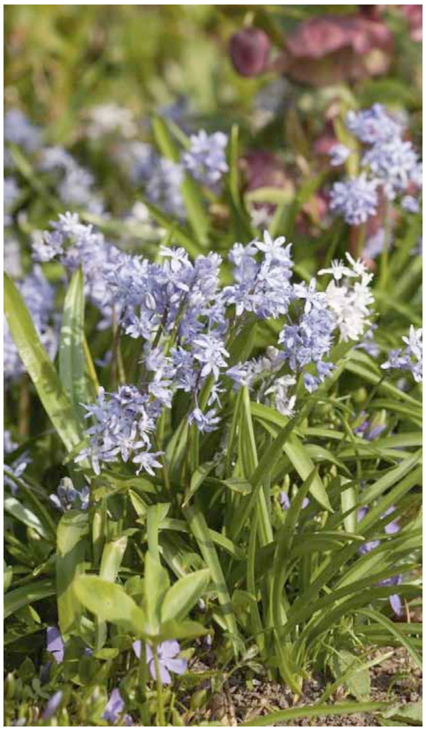
HEIGHT/SPREAD 40cm x 100cm.

ORIGINS Turkey in wet beech forests.

CONDITIONS Performs best in humus-rich, woody soil, in part or full shade.

SEASON March to April.





Scilla bithynica

The Turkish squill is easy to naturalise but not commonly grown. Its densely packed spikes of compact conical racemes can hold up to 20 starry mid-blue flowers, each flecked with six dark anthers. The flower stems stand 15-20cm tall with each flower only 1.5cm wide. Small spherical seedheads follow the flowers. Dark strap-shaped leaves hug the floor and colonies are quick to increase, making it excellent for colonising under trees and shrubs. At Dixter a large group exist on a north corner among male ferns where the scilla flowers first before being taken over by the ferns for the rest of the year.

HEIGHT/SPREAD 20cm x 20cm. AGM

ORIGINS Turkey and neighbouring Bulgaria.

CONDITIONS Part shade in most soil.

SEASON March to April.

Ulex europaeus 'Flore Pleno'

A compact and attractive form of the common gorse making a rounded, jagged shrub with outward-reaching branches and a soft grey-green body. In spring and summer this becomes laden with clusters of bronze tipped pale yellow buds. These open into fully double, rich chrome yellow flowers. The intoxicating scent of coconut is nasally alluring, but the shrub is excessively prickly. Plants are sterile therefore less social than the parent. Needs periodic cutting back.

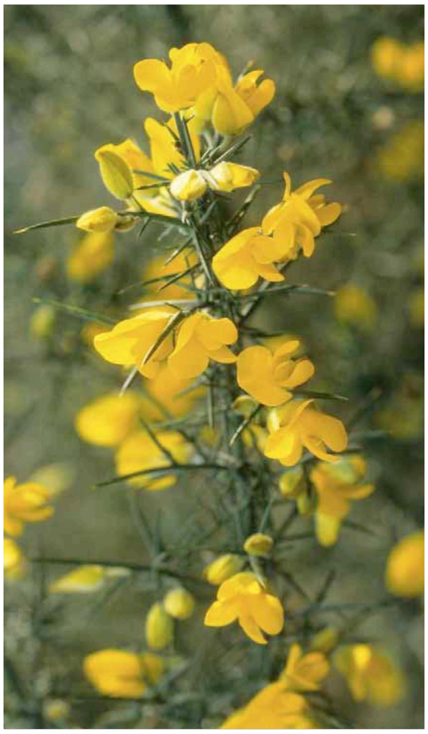
HEIGHT/SPREAD 1.5m x 1.5m. AGM

ORIGINS First appeared in John Miller's Bristol Nursery in the 1820s.

CONDITIONS Well-drained, poor, acid or neutral soils in full sun.

HARDINESS RATING RHS H4, USDA 8b-9a.

SEASON March to May and intermittently throughout the year.



MARIANNE MAJERUS

day out for the plantaholic. **www.rhs.org.uk**

A visit to **The Beth Chatto Gardens** is always a masterclass and inspiration in planting design in terms of plant ecology, texture, foliage and structure. Since 1960 it has been transformed from an overgrown wasteland with poor gravel soil and boggy hollows into a fantastic garden harmonising with the surrounding countryside. You'll see plenty of mouthwatering combinations, and plenty of contrasting fresh spring foliage, flowers, and woodland bulbs. **www.bethchatto.co.uk**

The Savill Garden at The Great Park Windsor in Berkshire was created by Sir Eric Savill in the 1930s. Under the leadership of John Bond and now Mark Flanagan, this 35-acre site of interconnecting gardens has a reputation for vivid spring displays of magnolias, rhododendrons and camellias through intertwining paths and woodland walks. **www.theroyallandscape.co.uk/gardens-and-landscape/the-savill-garden**

The Beth Chatto Gardens in spring.

JONATHAN BUCKLEY / GAP PHOTOS

The great clean-up

As life and colour start to return to the garden, now is the time to grab your mower and secateurs, go out and stamp your authority on your space

WORDS **LIA LEENDERTZ** ILLUSTRATION **PETRA BÖRNER**

Cut the lawn

I love the first cut of the year, striding out with mower and lawn edger to turn the choppy smooth and the ragged sharp. Cut and edge the lawn and beat back the encroaching wilderness. All is temporarily ordered and domesticated again. No wolves here. My lawn is no great shakes, but cutting early and then regularly encourages growth from the roots, which thickens the sward: a good thing whether you're after a bowling green or a place for kids to romp. This first cut should be high and light, just enough to remind it who's boss, so lift the mower blades.

Prune roses

However inconsistent my gardening style, my roses don't care. Hack them back to within an inch of their lives, painstakingly prune each stem to an outward-facing bud, neglect them completely: it's all the same to them. They flower on new growth anyway, and do it despite me. But I can influence how they do it, congested in a clump atop the plant or at the ends of lengths of new growth. As my allotment roses exist purely so that I can cut them and smugly tell everyone who enters the house that I grew them myself, vaguely long stems are required. I will cut the plants back by a third shortly, and after will put back what I've removed as a sprinkling of chicken manure pellets, and a blanket of garden compost.

Sweet peas

If you sowed sweet peas in autumn you will be rewarded with earlier blooms than me, for I failed. It's not too late for me though – I have just pushed a few seeds each into a few pots of compost (mainly the almost-too-tasteful 'Cupani'; none of your gauche large-flowered types here). I have planted seed straight into the ground in the past, and it's a very generous way of feeding the local mouse population, but if you want actual plants you must be a little more wily. If you sowed when you should, pinch the plants back to a low bud now to encourage bushiness, and plant out.

Things to do

Check around the garden for soil and plants that have been 'lifted' by repeated frosts and thaws. Push them gently back in so roots aren't exposed.

Sprinkle an organic fertiliser around bulbs as they finish flowering.

Prune back winter jasmine and winter honeysuckle.

Cover rhubarb with an upturned bin to force pink, tender stems.

Look out for early aphid infestations and spray with mild soap and water, or squash between finger and thumb.

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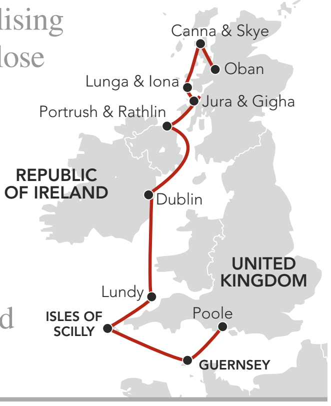

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The Itinerary in brief

Day 1 - Oban. Embark this afternoon.

Day 2 - Canna & Skye. Today we arrive at the Small Islands. Spend the morning on Canna which has a tiny agricultural and cattle-rearing population. Sail during lunch to Skye and the majestic Loch Scavaig.

Day 3 - Lunga & Iona. Explore the tiny Treshnish Islands, located in the waters between Mull and Tiree. We hope to land on the largest of the islands, Lunga to walk amongst the amazingly tame Puffins and see the remnants of past habitation that dates back to Viking times. Sail over lunch to Iona, a place of deep spiritual significance.

Day 4 - Jura & Gigha. Arrive this morning on the tiny island of Jura where we have a chance to sample the island's treasure - its whisky, or perhaps take a walk around Craignure to look over the Bay of Small Isles. Sail to the beautiful island of Gigha where we will spend the morning in the gardens of Achamore House.

Day 5 - Portrush & Rathlin. Visit the Giant's Causeway which became widely known from the 1700s as the 'Eighth Wonder of the World'. We return to the ship via Dunluce Castle where we have time to explore the extensive ruins of this medieval castle. Cruise over to nearby Rathlin Island during lunch and enjoy a guided walk.

Day 6 - Dublin. We will drive out into the Wicklow Mountains and the wonderfully sited gardens of Powerscourt, 47 acres of Italian, Japanese and walled gardens. After a local lunch we continue to Mount Usher, a lovely romantic garden.

Day 7 - Lundy Island. Spend the morning on Lundy. Walk along its traffic-free lanes and paths, explore the wide bays and coves by way of hanging valleys and observe the Puffins.

Day 8 - Isles of Scilly. Today is devoted to the lovely islands of Scilly. Spend the morning on traffic free Tresco, walking its idyllic lanes from the beach to the famous sub-tropical Abbey Gardens. During lunch onboard sail across to St Agnes surrounded by rocks and reefs, this delightful tiny island is a birdwatcher's paradise.

Day 9 - Guernsey & Herm. Arrive this morning on Guernsey, the 'Island of Flowers'. There will be the option to visit Hauteville House where Victor Hugo resided for 14 years. Alternatively visit Castle Cornet which guards the entrance to St Peter Port Harbour.

Day 10 - Poole. Disembark this morning.

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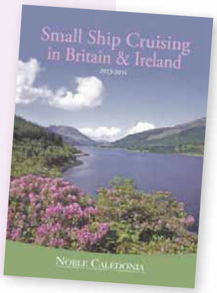

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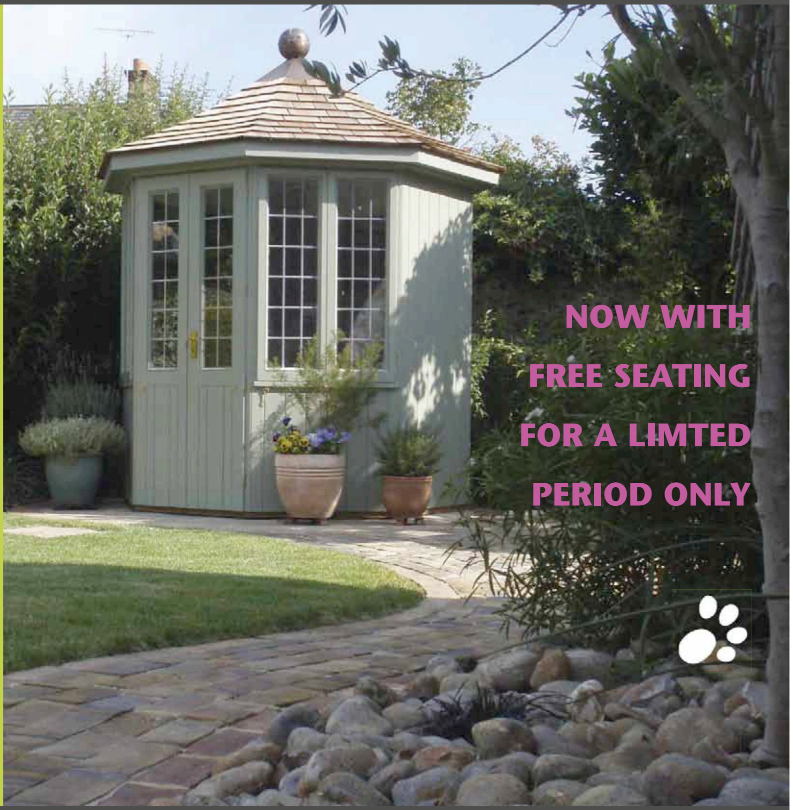

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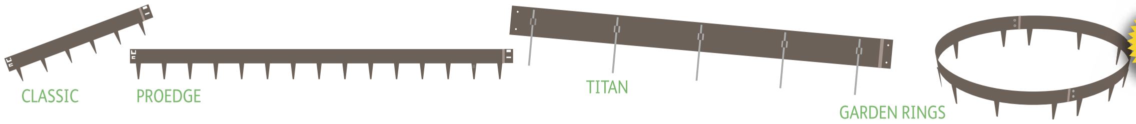

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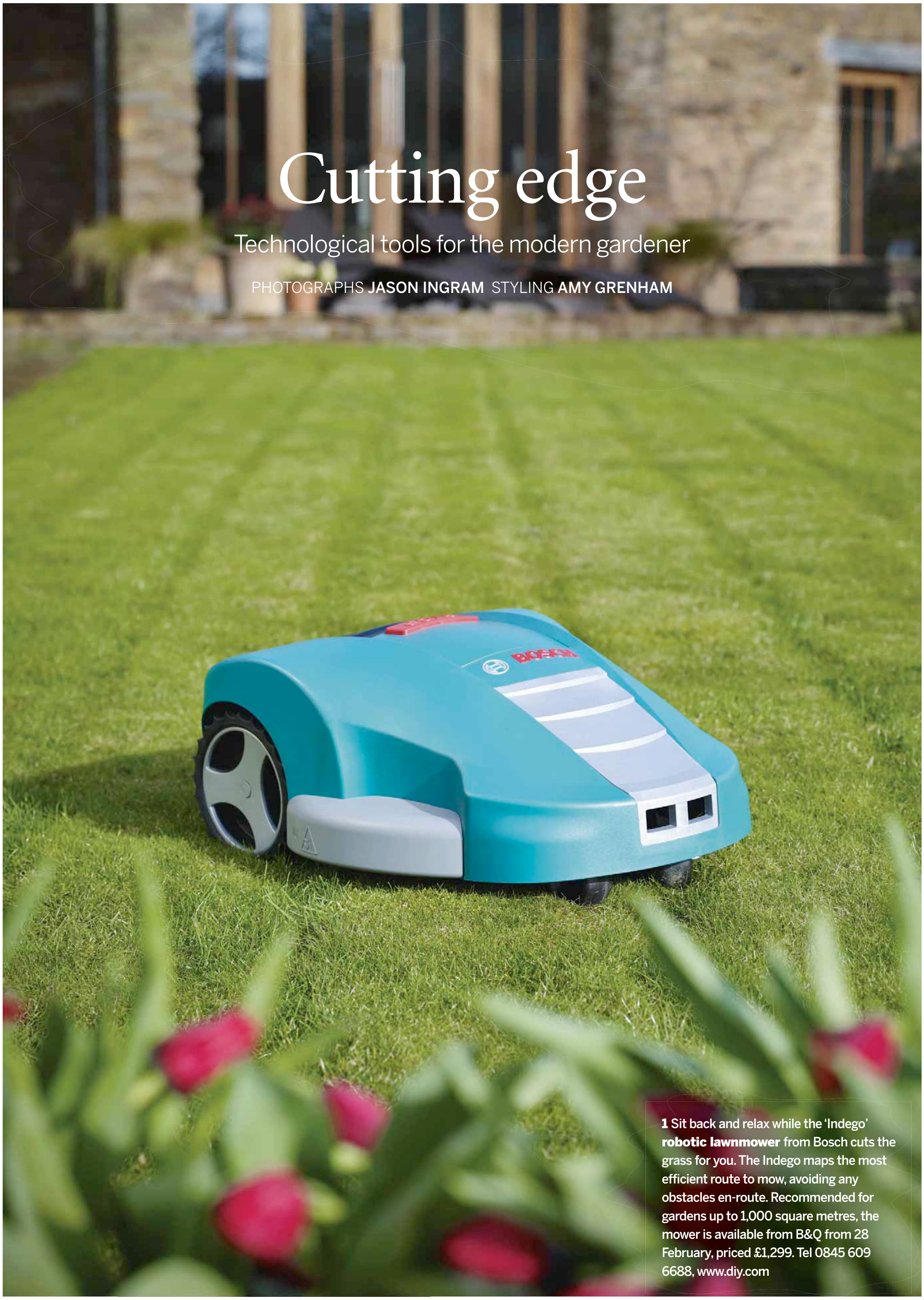


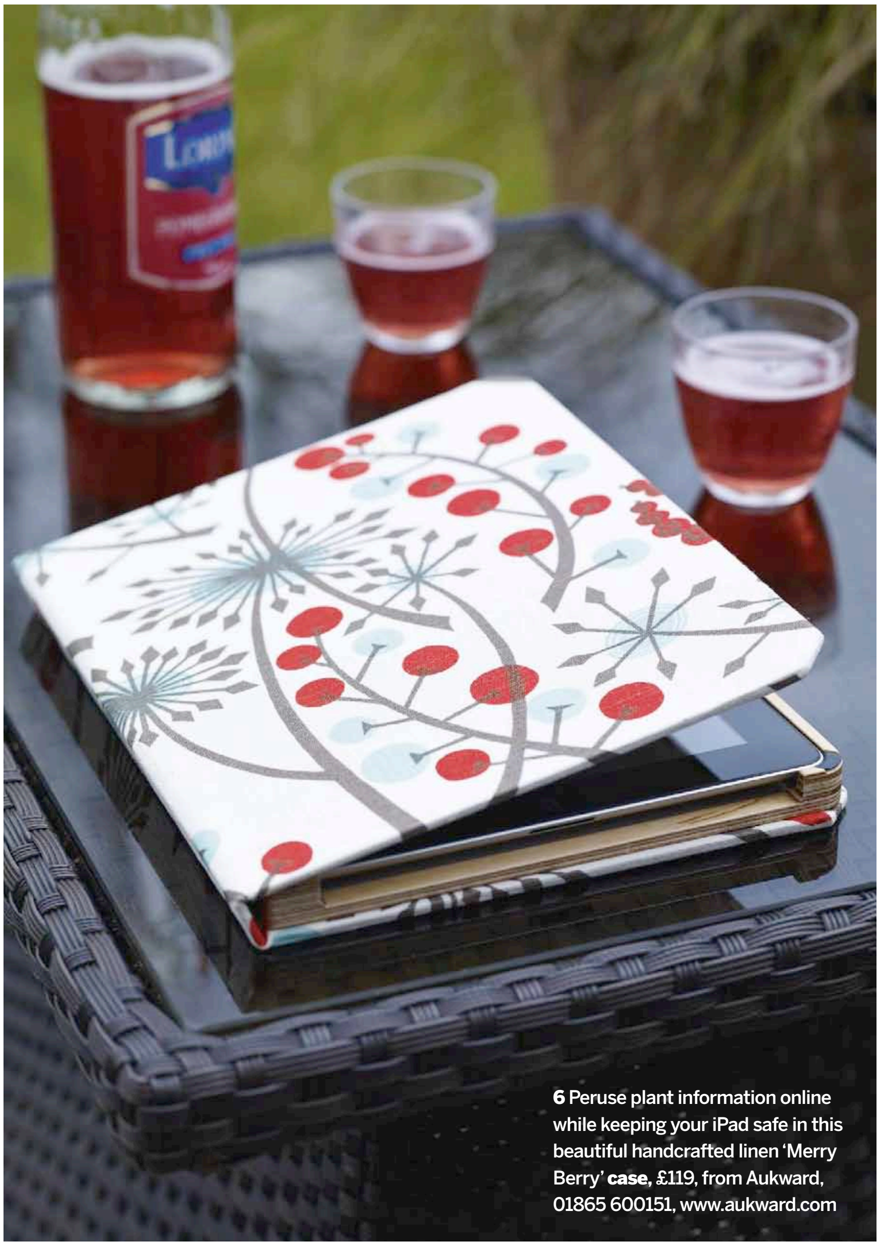
Cutting edge

Technological tools for the modern gardener

PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM** STYLING **AMY GRENHAM**

1 Sit back and relax while the 'Indego' **robotic lawnmower** from Bosch cuts the grass for you. The Indego maps the most efficient route to mow, avoiding any obstacles en-route. Recommended for gardens up to 1,000 square metres, the mower is available from B&Q from 28 February, priced £1,299. Tel 0845 609 6688, www.diy.com

2



6 Peruse plant information online while keeping your iPad safe in this beautiful handcrafted linen 'Merry Berry' **case,** £119, from Aukward, 01865 600151, www.aukward.com

SOLARKETTLE.CO.UK

3

4

bluebellgray

5

2 The Pure Rain **oxygenating sprinkler** infuses microscopic oxygen nanobubbles into ordinary hosewater, promoting up to 30 per cent more plant growth. £29.99 from Pure Rain. Call 0844 871 0963 for stockists, or visit www.purerain.com

3 Get hot water wherever there is sunshine with this **solar kettle**. £37.99, Nigel's Eco Store, www.nigelsecostore.com. Drink from these **porcelain cups** with oak lids from Isak, £28 for a pair, www.isak.co.uk

4 Keep your prize specimens safe with the Koubachi WiFi outdoor **plant sensor**. Monitoring light intensity, soil moisture and air temperature of up to 27 plants at a time, you receive updates automatically to your smart phone or laptop, letting you know what your plants need, €100, Koubachi, www.koubachi.com

5 WoodTones **earbuds** have are made of reclaimed wood in ebony, beech or sapele, by Griffin Technology, £24.90 available from www.amazon.co.uk. Bluebellgray 'Red Rose' **iPhone cover**, £15 (now £9) available from Amara, 0800 587 7645, www.amara.co.uk

Location garden by Blueprint Landscape Design, 0117 9098024, www.blueprintlandscape.co.uk

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TASTY WALKS GUERNSEY

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For more information about Tasty Walks, go to **visitguernsey.com/tastywalks**

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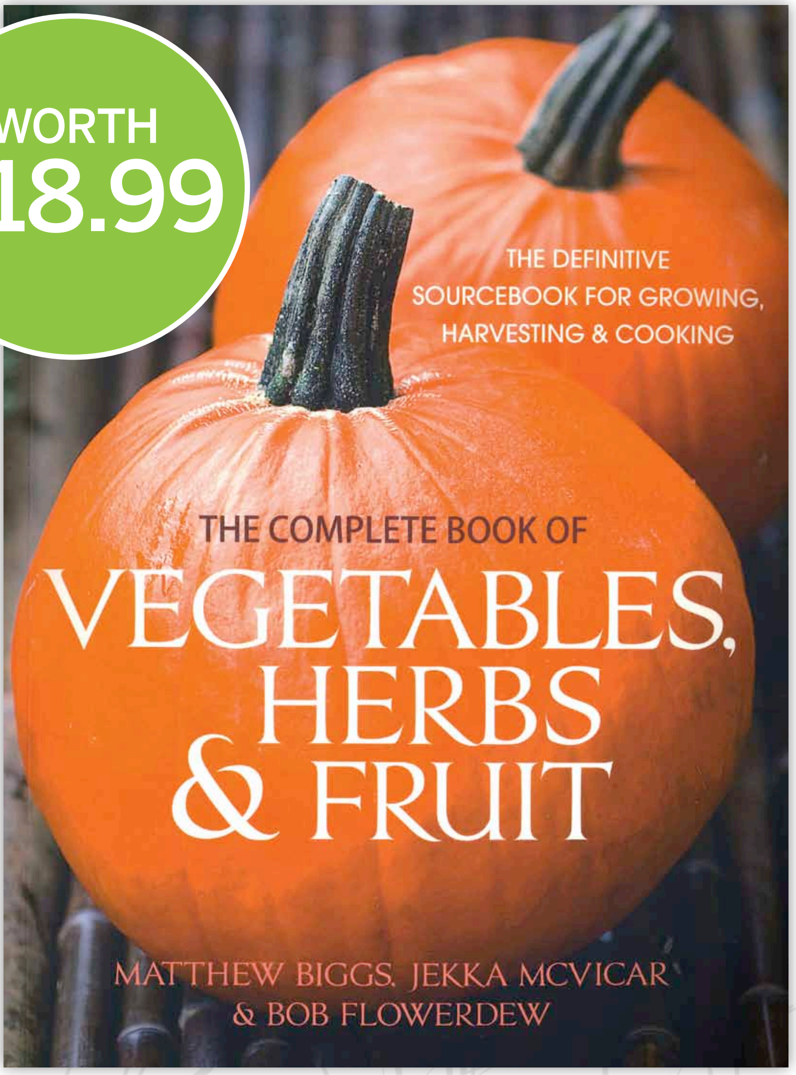
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Dina Deferme designed her garden to offer seclusion and sit comfortably within its rural setting.

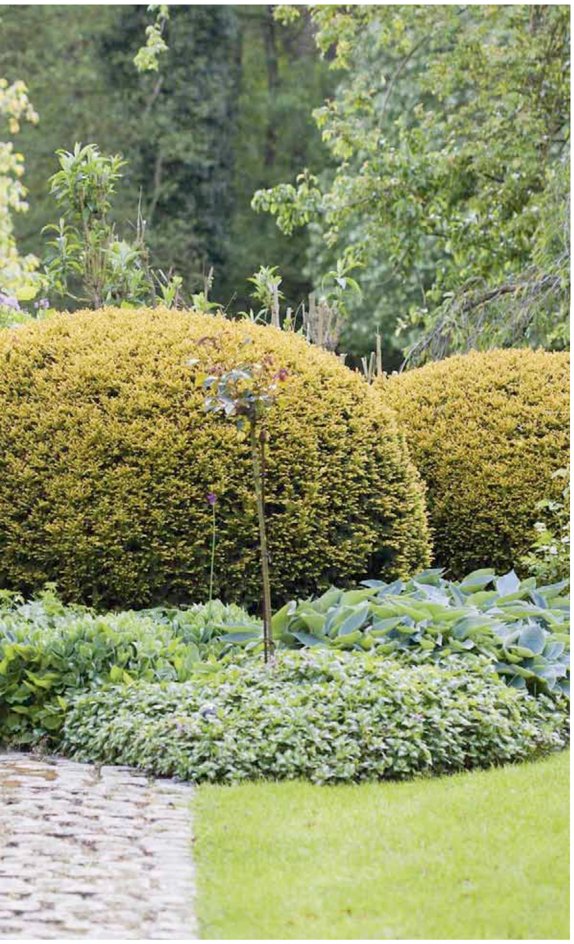
In brief

WHAT Private garden combining formality with exuberant planting.
WHERE Near the town of Hasselt, northern Belgium.
SIZE 4 hectares.
CLIMATE Cold and dry winters, hot summers.
HARDINESS RATING RHS H5 USDA 7b/8a.
SOIL Neutral poor sand.
POINTS OF INTEREST Strong structural planting with long-flowering herbaceous borders and intimate enclosures.

Fresh meaning

Dina Deferme's private garden gave her a new lease of life and broke with Belgian architectural traditions

WORDS **JOHN HOYLAND** PHOTOGRAPHS **ROBERT MABIC / GAP PHOTOS**



When we meet, Dina Deferme tells me: "This garden saved my life." Most of us feel close to our gardens and many of us use hyperbole when we talk about how important our gardens are to us, but Dina Deferme is serious. After a terrible accident that left her badly burned and disfigured she withdrew from the world, and, during a decade of painful surgery, created a luxuriant garden: a place of vigour, vitality and beauty that is one of the most visited private gardens in Belgium. Thanks to her garden she overcame her adversity.

Dina studied fine art and as a young woman had imagined her future as a painter until the call of the natural world attracted her to explore landscape architecture. "My grandmother was a great gardener. I enjoyed working in the garden with my parents and I loved plants. Becoming a landscape architect felt comfortable and right." One of the main influences on her designs was the Belgian landscape architect Jacques Wirtz, best known in Britain for the gardens around Canary Wharf in London and those of the Alnwick Garden in Northumberland.

What was in Dina's mind when she began her garden in 1991 was Wirtz's sculptural treatment of trees and shrubs married with the formality of classical French and Italian gardens. Before proceeding with a design, though, she spent a long time getting to know the site: how the light changed during the seasons, which plants grew well, what the space felt like. "When we arrived we put up the hedges around the garden because this was to be my haven from the world and then we took four years to lay out the rest of the garden." Her partner Tony Pirotte constructed wide paths of stone pavers and planted hornbeam, box and yew hedges to Dina's design. She created several enclosed areas, each with a different view across the garden. "I wanted to enclose the space to shield me from the world but I did want to have views out across the garden and towards the landscape." Each part of the garden looks out on to other areas within it and outwards to the trees and fields beyond. And everywhere there are benches, tables, chairs: places to pause. "It is too easy to rush around a garden. It is important to sit and to ponder and to look."

Within the garden is a large, clear meadow, where Dina's horses often graze. "I wanted it to be inside of the garden so that there is a calm quiet spot that relaxes the eye. I also wanted my animals near me; everything in the natural world is important and should be part of a garden."

In a country where the winters are long and dreary, the structure of the garden is crucial; even the weak light of winter accentuates the delicate tracery of the hornbeam hedges. For Dina the harsh winters mean that it is important to make the most of the rest of the year and she

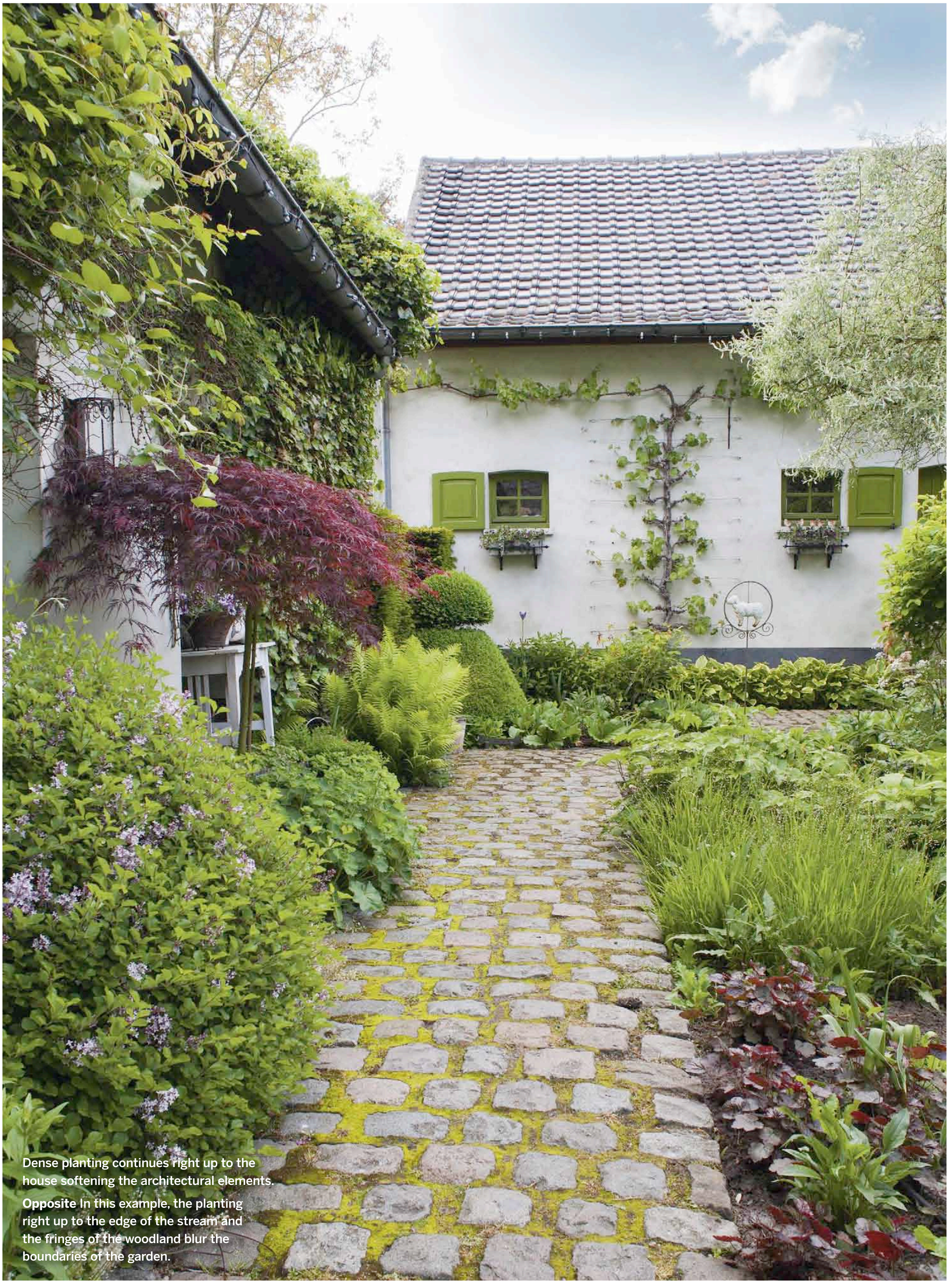
Continued on page 34 ▷

Top left Dina incorporates lots of seating areas into the garden to encourage visitors to pause. Close to the house the seats are encircled with low box hedges and densely planted borders.

Top right Tightly clipped evergreens define the borders and give structure within them. These domes are of yew, which Dina says stand up to heavy snow better than box.

Bottom left Each part of the garden has views out across other areas of the garden or into the surrounding landscape. Here a grass path leads the eye towards a paddock and the woods beyond.

Bottom right Hornbeam, box and yew are used to create the formal architecture of the garden.



Dense planting continues right up to the house softening the architectural elements.

Opposite In this example, the planting right up to the edge of the stream and the fringes of the woodland blur the boundaries of the garden.

> *“We were used to strongly architectural gardens with understated planting. Seeing the romance and luxuriance of my planting schemes was new to many gardeners”*

▷ wanted her borders to be full of colour and vibrancy for as long as possible. During the recovery from her accident she visited many gardens in Britain, including Hidcote, Tintinhull and Sissinghurst, to study plant combinations and ways of making the border sing from spring through into autumn.

“Twenty years ago this was something novel in Belgium. We were used to strongly architectural gardens with understated planting. Seeing the romance and luxuriance of my planting schemes was new to many gardeners.”

To sustain the wide palette of plants that her planting style needs, Dina maintains close links with specialist nurseries. “You need a good relationship with nurserymen because they know so much more than most of us about plants, particularly new varieties.” She cautions against the overenthusiastic claims made for newly bred cultivars. “Don’t listen to the plant marketing people, particularly when it comes to a plant’s hardiness: you have to test plants for yourself.” Before introducing a plant into one of her schemes she grows it for at least two seasons in a field adjacent to the garden to see how it performs.

Many gardens contain the story of their maker. Embedded in Dina Deferme’s garden is the story of her recovery from terrible disfigurement, through a long and painful decade, to light and colour and vitality. Hers is an uplifting story and an uplifting garden. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Beuzestraat 64, Stokrooie (Hasselt),
3511 Belgium.
Tel +32 (0)11 25 64 58, www.deferme.be
Open every Sunday in June, July and August and by appointment.

Dina Deferme has designed other gardens in the area, also open to the public. Details of opening times can be found at www.deferme.be

- **The Adams’ garden**
Wolvenstraat 27, 2370 Arendonk.
- **Corry Broekx’s garden**
Dingenstraat 9, 3960 Bree.
- **The Vanormelingen’s garden (De Horne)**
Brugstraat 30, 3870 Vechmaal.

Dina Deferme’s advice

Five tips that help ensure your borders look good throughout the summer

Feed the soil

Expecting plants to perform to the maximum takes a lot of energy. Dina digs lots of manure into the soil when planting and mulches every spring with a layer of well-rotted horse manure. She advises not to forget to mulch shrubs and hedges.

Plant early-flowering perennials close by late-flowering ones

There is a tendency in lots of gardens to grow plants that flower at the same time next to each other. Dina advises against this: having, for example, a spring plant next to one that flowers in autumn will mean that you have fewer gaps in the border.

Plant densely

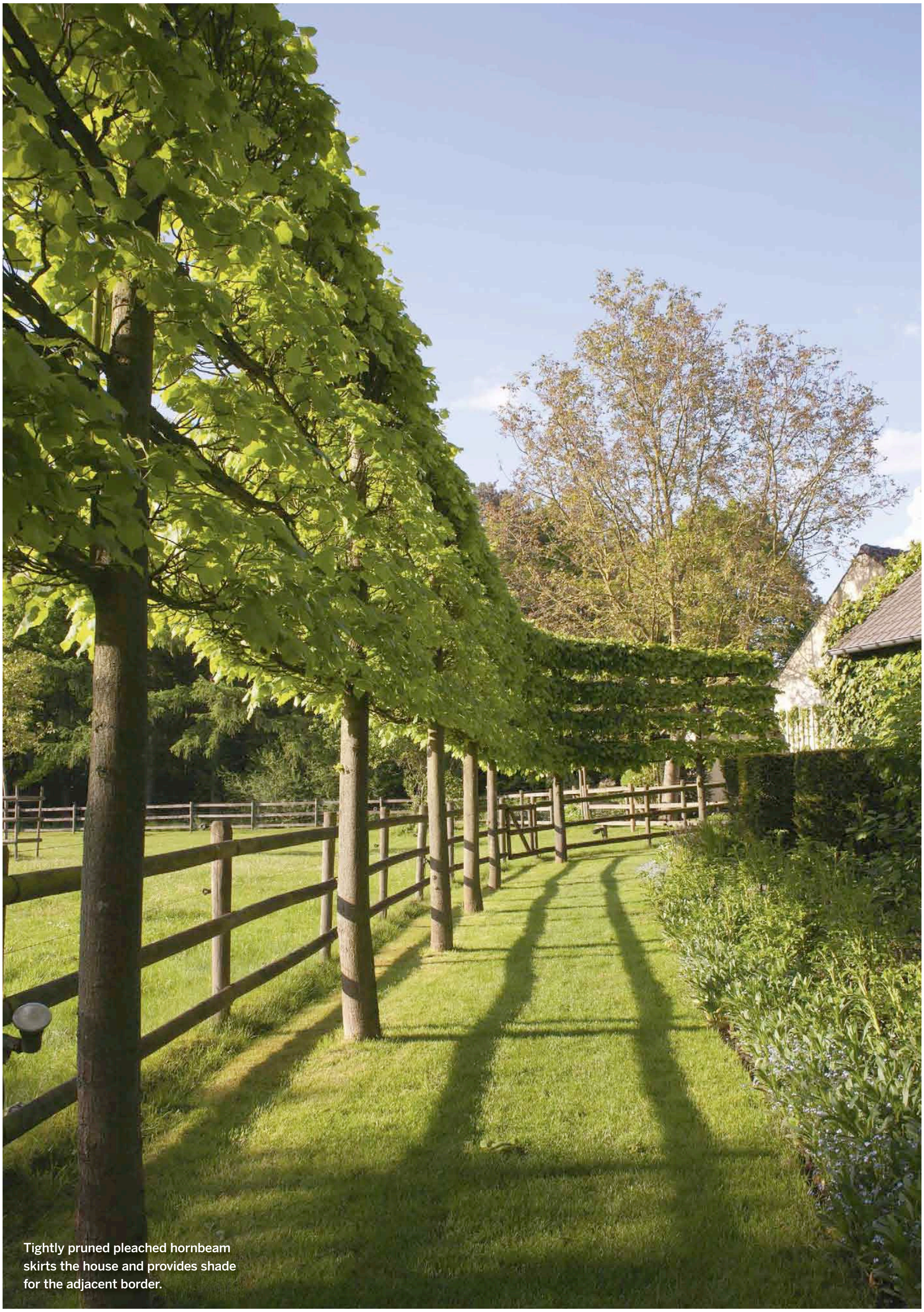
Do not leave even the tiniest gap in your planting schemes. This may mean planting too densely the first year but it is easy to remove plants that have spread too far. Keep a notebook with you and record which plants need controlling.

Feed the soil a second time

At the end of June Dina gives the garden a second feed, this time with an organic granular fertiliser. This gives a boost to re-flowering roses and irises. It also helps plants recover from the shock of being cut back and stimulates late-flowering perennials.

Dead head and cut back

Dead-heading is a daily job from spring onwards as a way of encouraging maximum flower production. As soon as a perennial has finished flowering it is cut back hard. This means that even those that do not flower a second time will have neat attractive foliage and will not take up space that could be used by flowering plants.

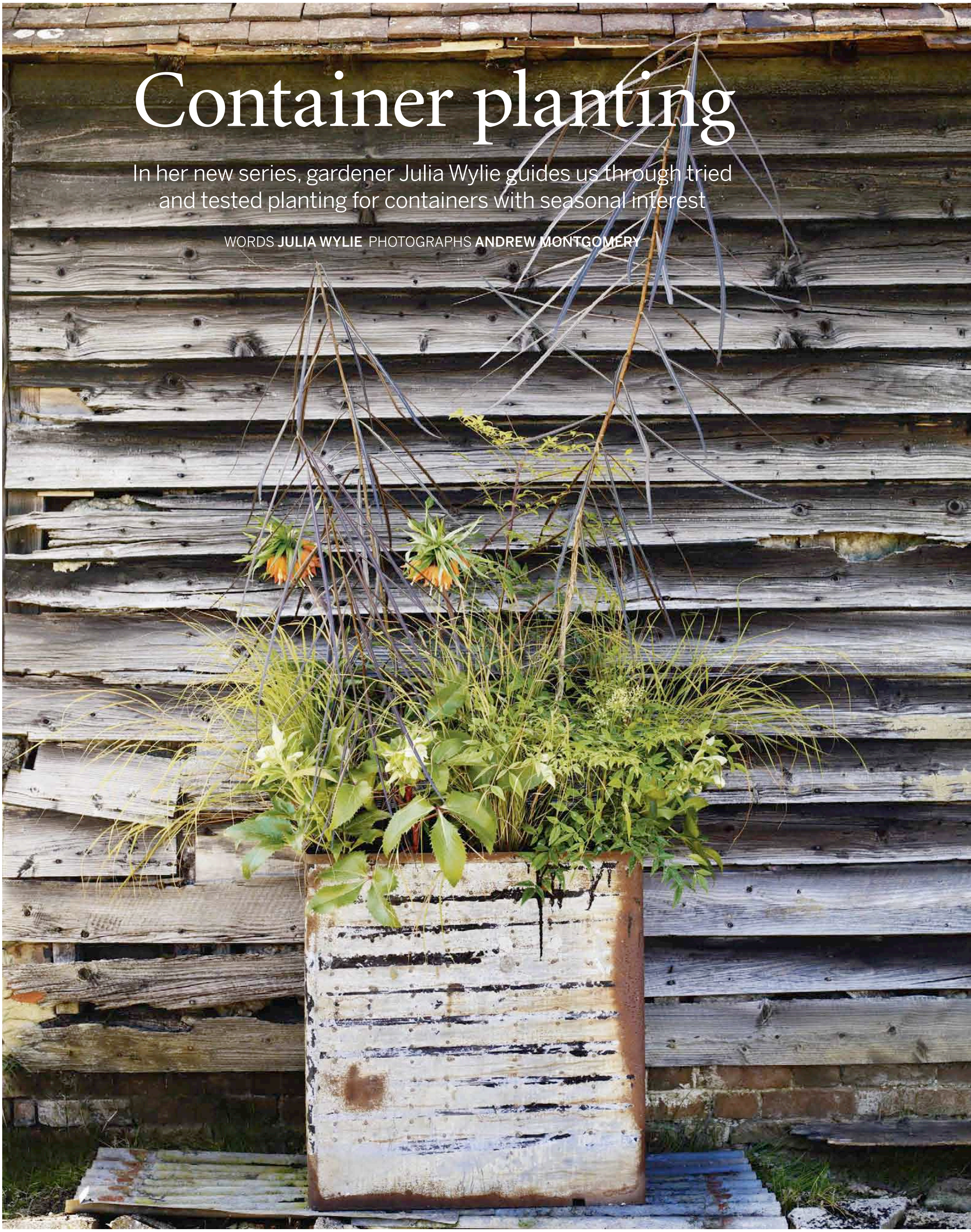


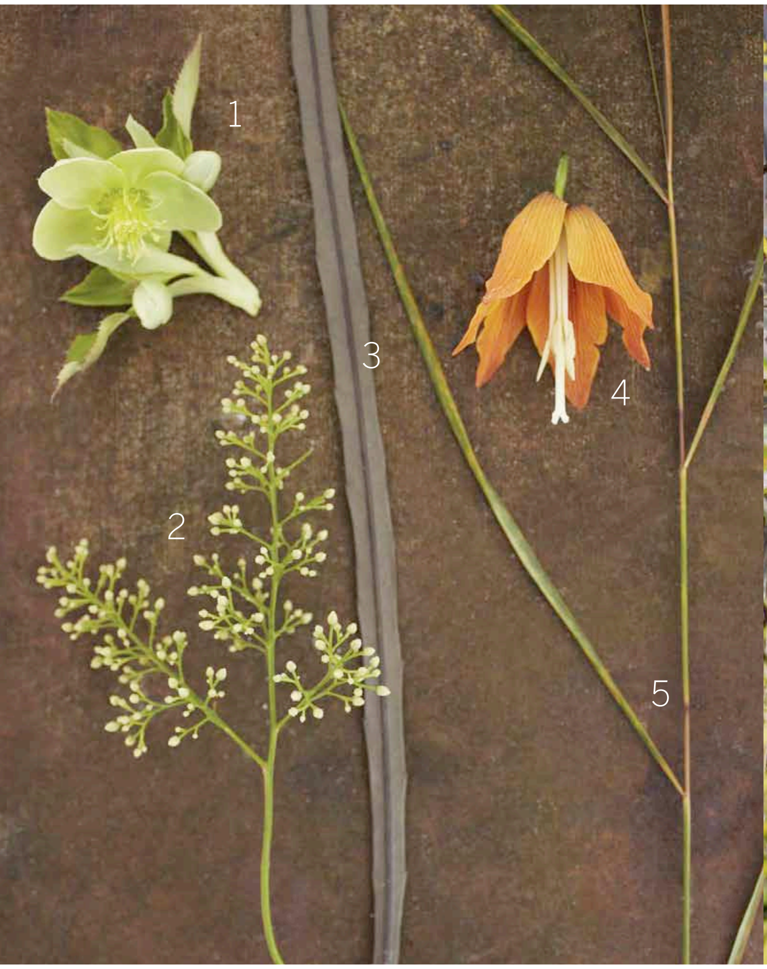
Tightly pruned pleached hornbeam skirts the house and provides shade for the adjacent border.

Container planting

In her new series, gardener Julia Wylie guides us through tried and tested planting for containers with seasonal interest

WORDS **JULIA WYLIE** PHOTOGRAPHS **ANDREW MONTGOMERY**





Tough tank

The plants pictured here are like old friends I can always rely on. They are suited to difficult situations such as shady courtyards, narrow borders and containers where the priority is for a year-round display. They are most valuable in late winter, especially if placed close to a window or entrance, but they can be spiced up for prolonged summer drama.

The lime green Corsican hellebores provide early nectar for brave bumblebees, so for a smaller pot simply pair them with the grasses and a few spring bulbs such as white daffodils and tulips. I have used a couple of striking orange *Fritillaria imperialis* bulbs, which could be replaced with lilies for later colour and scent in summer. In late spring, fill any gaps with tall scented tobacco flowers (*Nicotiana alata* or *N. sylvestris*) that will flower until the first frosts.

How to achieve the look

Long-lasting and dramatic

The quirky black-leaved *Pseudopanax crassifolius* (from New Zealand) is one of the few evergreen trees that will grow happily in a container. An alternative is the strawberry tree *Arbutus unedo*, perfect for roof terraces and exposed places. To accommodate further layers of planting, the lower leaves and branches of the upright evergreen shrub *Nandina domestica* can be removed. If the grass *Anemanthele lessoniana* becomes tatty or starts to crowd out any of its neighbours remove the older leaves or cut to the base in spring. They will happily self-seed.

Soil preparation

For permanent/perennial displays the pots need to be big and the growing medium well prepared. Use one part hydroleca or horticultural grit to three parts loam-based compost to aid moisture retention, aeration and drainage. Soak during dry spells and before applying slow-release organic fertiliser in spring. Top-dress with compost in winter.

An improvised container

I found this unusual water tank discarded at the edge of a nursery. The proprietors kindly loaned it to me.

Plants

1 *Helleborus argutifolius*
AMOUNT 2-3. HEIGHT 50cm.
SEASON Evergreen. AGM*
2 *Nandina domestica*
AMOUNT 2. HEIGHT 1-1.5m.
SEASON Evergreen. AGM
3 *Pseudopanax crassifolius*
AMOUNT 2-3. HEIGHT 3.5-10m.
SEASON Evergreen.
4 *Fritillaria imperialis* 'Aurora'
AMOUNT 2-3. HEIGHT 60-120cm.
SEASON Early to mid spring.
5 *Anemanthele lessoniana*
AMOUNT 2-3. HEIGHT 75cm.
SEASON Evergreen. AGM

Suppliers

Architectural Plants Tel 01403 891772, www.architecturalplants.com
Avant Gardener Tel 07831 196416, www.avantgardener.co.uk
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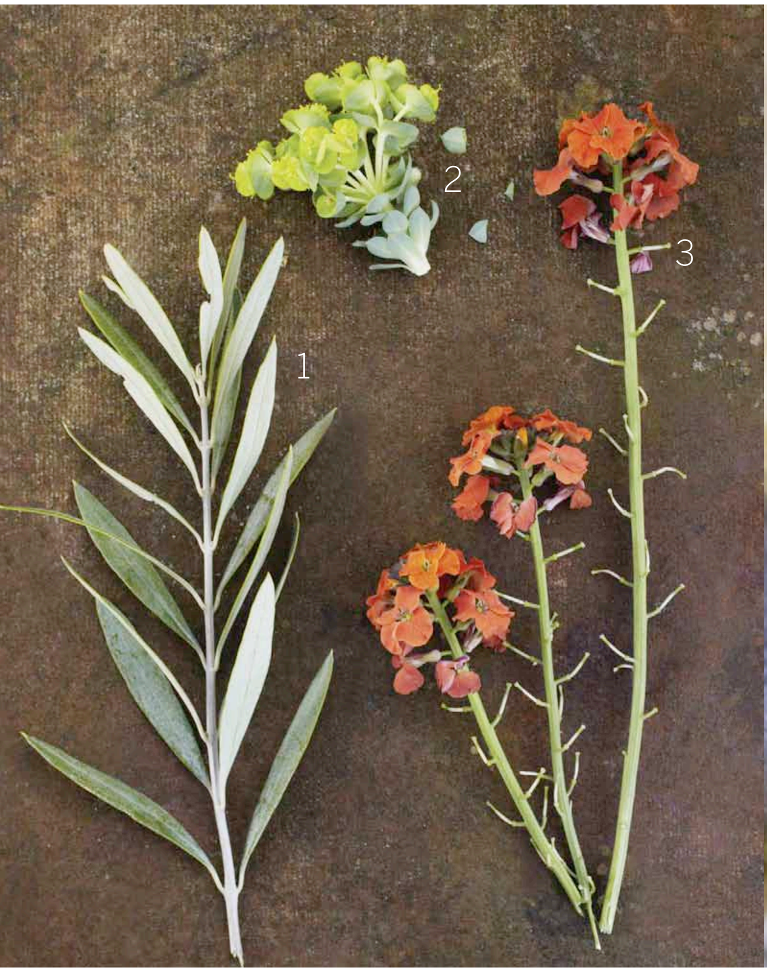
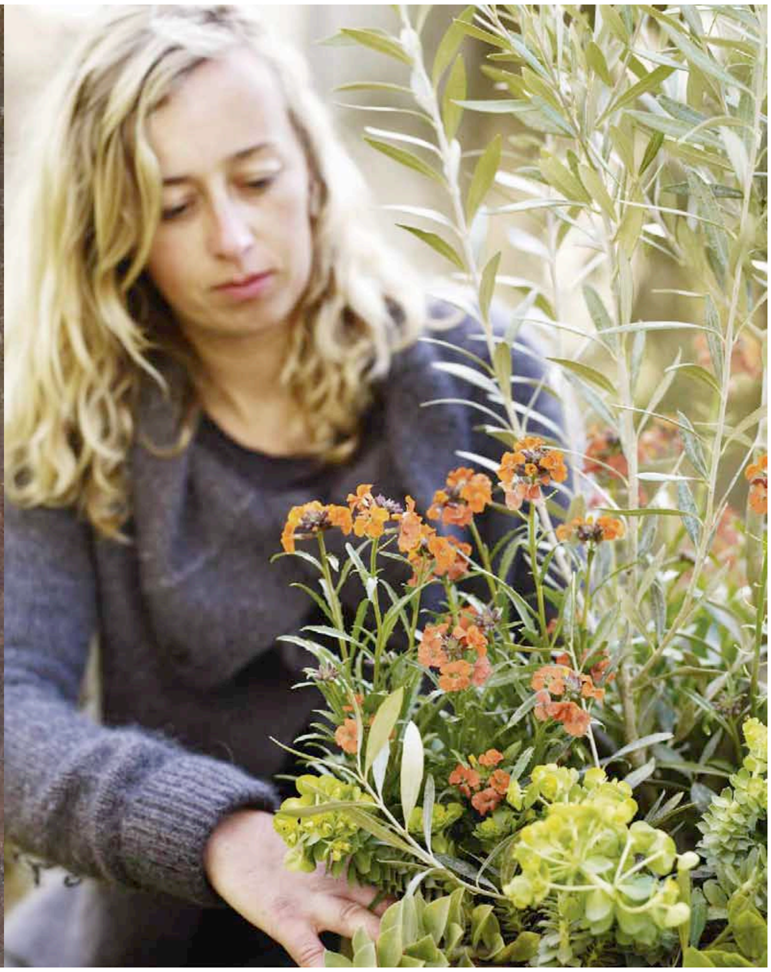




Sun lovers

Multi-stemmed olive trees make pleasingly wild subjects for pots. The uplifting silvery-grey leaves catch the weak winter sun and contrast with the acid green euphorbia and orange perennial wallflower. I generally plant the longer flowering purple wallflower *Erysimum* 'Bowles's Mauve', because not many of my clients like orange as much as I do! Both are very attractive to butterflies and bees, and will flower on and off for most of the year, including late winter in sheltered places. The dark brown containers give a warm earthy feel, but the plants would look equally good in large terracotta or silver metallic tubs.

How to achieve the look

Planting and pruning

If you only have a small pot to plant up, then the *Euphorbia* will be fine on its own. I have seen it trailing from the top of a narrow-necked terracotta urn and it would also be striking, if slightly eccentric, in a chimney pot. The new shoots will push from the centre so spent flower stems should be removed to encourage new growth. The wallflowers will also require regular deadheading and a light trim (if they ever stop flowering) to keep them from becoming leggy. They are easy to propagate from semi-hardwood cuttings in spring or summer, so could be replaced every few years if necessary.

Compost and care

In sheltered parts, you might be able to harvest a few olives, especially if watered well during the growing season (March-September). All these plants are drought tolerant, but will require more water and care when growing in pots, so the bigger the pot, the better. A mulch of gravel will help to keep their roots cool and conserve moisture. They will appreciate a loam-based, free-draining, moist growing medium, as described on the previous page. A sprinkling of 'blood fish and bone' – be careful not to get any on the leaves – in late spring will encourage growth and flowers. I often wish to plant something similar at the base of potted olives outside restaurants.

Plants

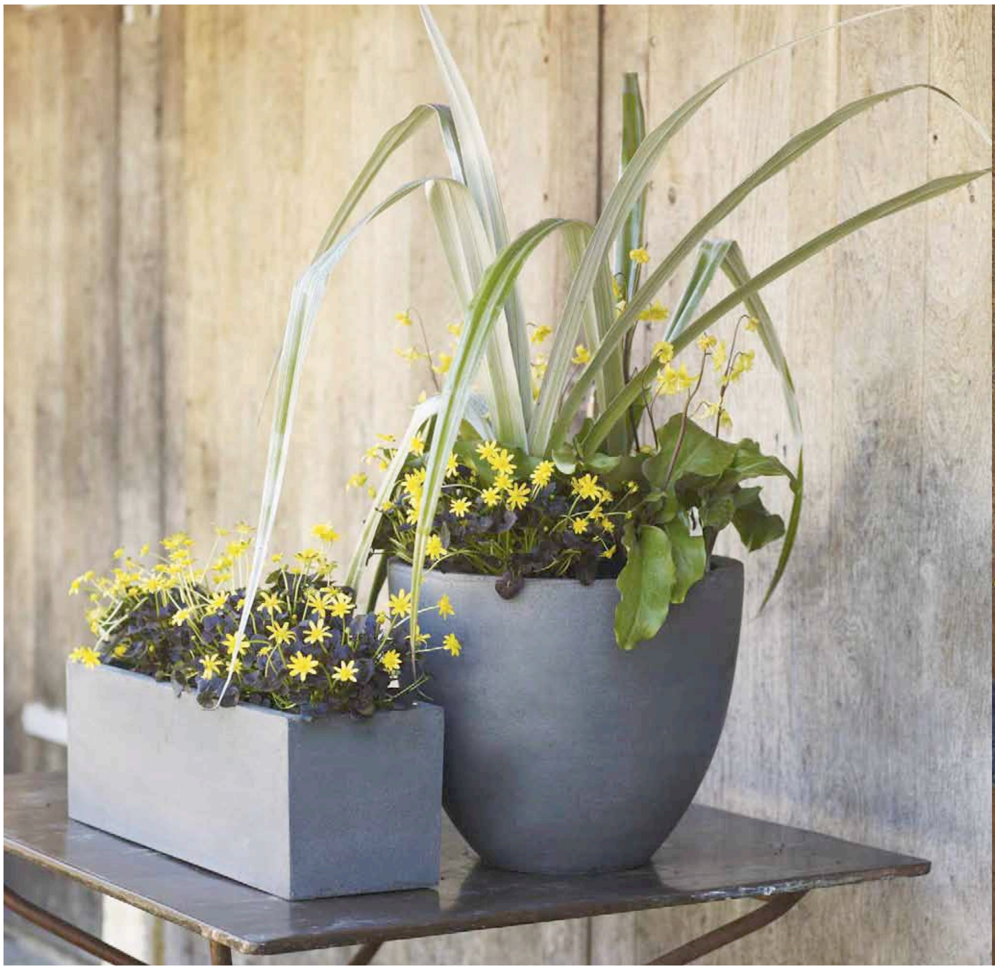
1 *Olea europaea*
AMOUNT 1. HEIGHT 5-7m.
SEASON Evergreen.

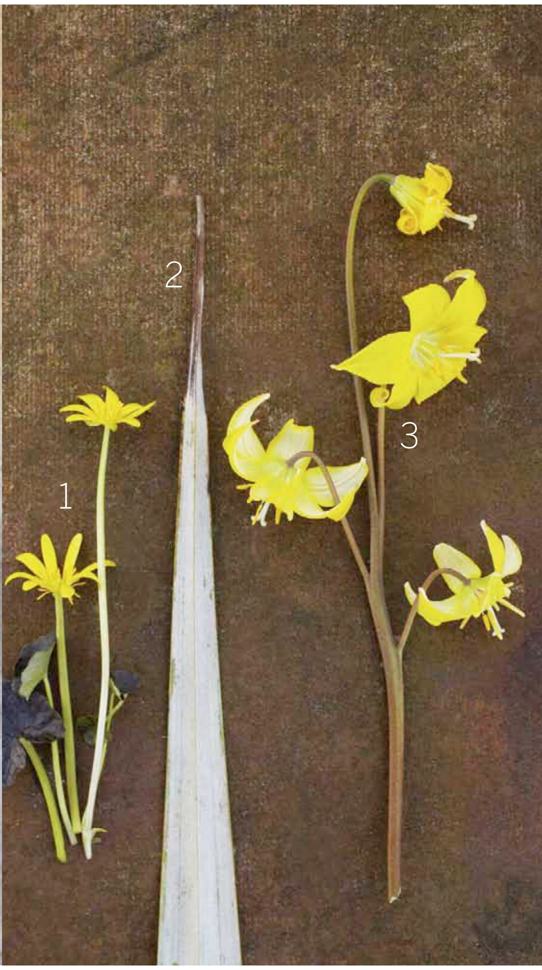
2 *Euphorbia myrsinites*
AMOUNT 2-3.
HEIGHT 15cm, spread 30cm.
SEASON Evergreen. AGM

3 *Erysimum* 'Apricot Delight'
AMOUNT 3-5. HEIGHT 60cm.
SEASON Evergreen.

Suppliers

Neal's Nurseries Garden Centre
Tel 020 8874 2037,
www.capitalgardensgroup.co.uk





Bright lights

Most silver evergreens need full sun, but the antipodean *Astelia chathamica* is an exception, ideal for lighting up dark corners. It prefers moist, rich soil in part shade, although I have found it on windy roof terraces, surviving in containers without irrigation in full sun. It makes a bold statement on its own, or as a series of formal pots with pebbles to shade its roots. The small black grass-like *Ophiopogan planiscapus* 'Nigrescens' would be an obvious companion, but I couldn't resist planting it with *Ranunculus ficaria* 'Brazen Hussy' and *Erythronium* 'Pagoda', which give a contrast of foliage, have similar requirements and provide nectar for bees. These pots would suit a shady courtyard, roof terrace or coastal garden.

How to achieve the look

Planting and aftercare

Both the ranunculus and the erythroniums are woodland perennials, so they come into leaf early in the year. Their foliage will die down after flowering, so either plant them in a suitable place in your garden as soon as they have flowered or remove the spent foliage and mulch the pots with fresh compost.

R. ficaria 'Brazen Hussy' would be happy in the window box for years, so could be moved out of sight during their dormant phase and swapped with another window box for summer. Any dead or damaged astelia foliage should be removed completely from the base of the plant as necessary. The silver leaves would also be complemented by pink or white cyclamen, which are widely available.

All three plants are perennials, so will appreciate moist loam-based compost. Hydroleca will help to retain moisture and aerate the soil conditions within the pot.

Containers

I chose the grey polystone pots to accentuate the bright yellow flowers and allow the purple and silver foliage to shine. They are made of a compound of stone and resin, which makes them lighter and easier to move around.

Plants

1 *Ranunculus ficaria* 'Brazen Hussy'
AMOUNT 7-11. HEIGHT 10cm.
SEASON Early spring.

2 *Astelia chathamica*
AMOUNT 1. HEIGHT 1.5m.
SEASON Evergreen. AGM

3 *Erythronium* 'Pagoda'
AMOUNT 3-5. HEIGHT 35cm
SEASON Flowers March-April. AGM

Suppliers

Grey polystone pots from Evergreen Pots & Soil Ltd, New Covent Garden Wholesale Market, but readily available at all good nurseries and garden centres.

Bulb bowl

When I first started gardening 16 years ago I was living on a farm in Buckinghamshire. I planted hundreds of *Fritillaria meleagris* bulbs in the grass beside the drive, which ran alongside a spinney. Unfortunately, mice must have discovered them, and the few that did manage to flower were pecked to shreds by the pheasants who obviously found them a curiosity. Now that I am living in London, I still have mice to contend with, but by planting a few bulbs in pots in autumn I am able to protect them with chicken wire. I can then elevate them to a prominent position to fully appreciate their delicate snake's head chequered bells. After flowering I plant them out so that they can naturalise in my garden.

How to achieve the look

Habitat
Native to Europe, these fritillaries would prefer to be in their traditional habitat of ancient low-lying hay meadows subject to winter flooding, but sadly these have mostly disappeared. So choose a sunny or partially shaded site, which will remain damp in summer. They will do well in flower borders, but are more likely to self-seed if planted in areas of long grass, uncut until August.

Planting
Perhaps another reason why my initial attempt failed was due to the bulbs' fragility. They might have dried out while in storage. Some experts believe in soaking them in lukewarm water for a few hours before planting to increase your chances. If you don't succeed, buy them in pots 'in the green' in spring.

Plant the bulbs as soon as possible in early autumn in moist, humus-rich, loam-based compost at four times their own depth, ensuring that the pots have holes for drainage. Protect with plastic netting or chicken wire.

Using small pots helps to prevent disturbing their roots when eventually planting out and if grouped together on a window ledge or table in decorative containers they will still create the meadow look. They should easily slide out of this cement bowl.

Plants

1 *Fritillaria meleagris*
AMOUNT 30-50 bulbs.
HEIGHT 30cm.
SEASON Flowers March-May.

Suppliers

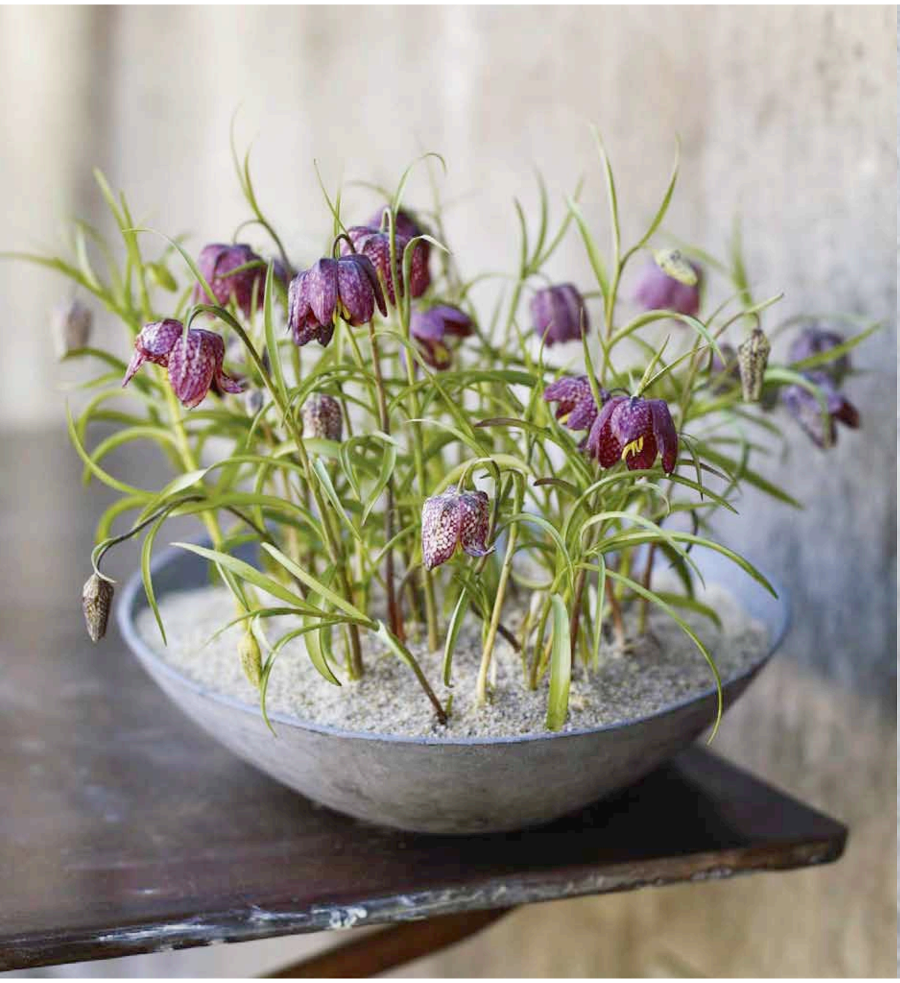
Specialist bulb nurseries such as **Avon Bulbs** Tel 01460 242177, www.avonbulbs.co.uk **Broadleigh Bulbs** Tel 01823 286231, www.broadleighbulbs.co.uk

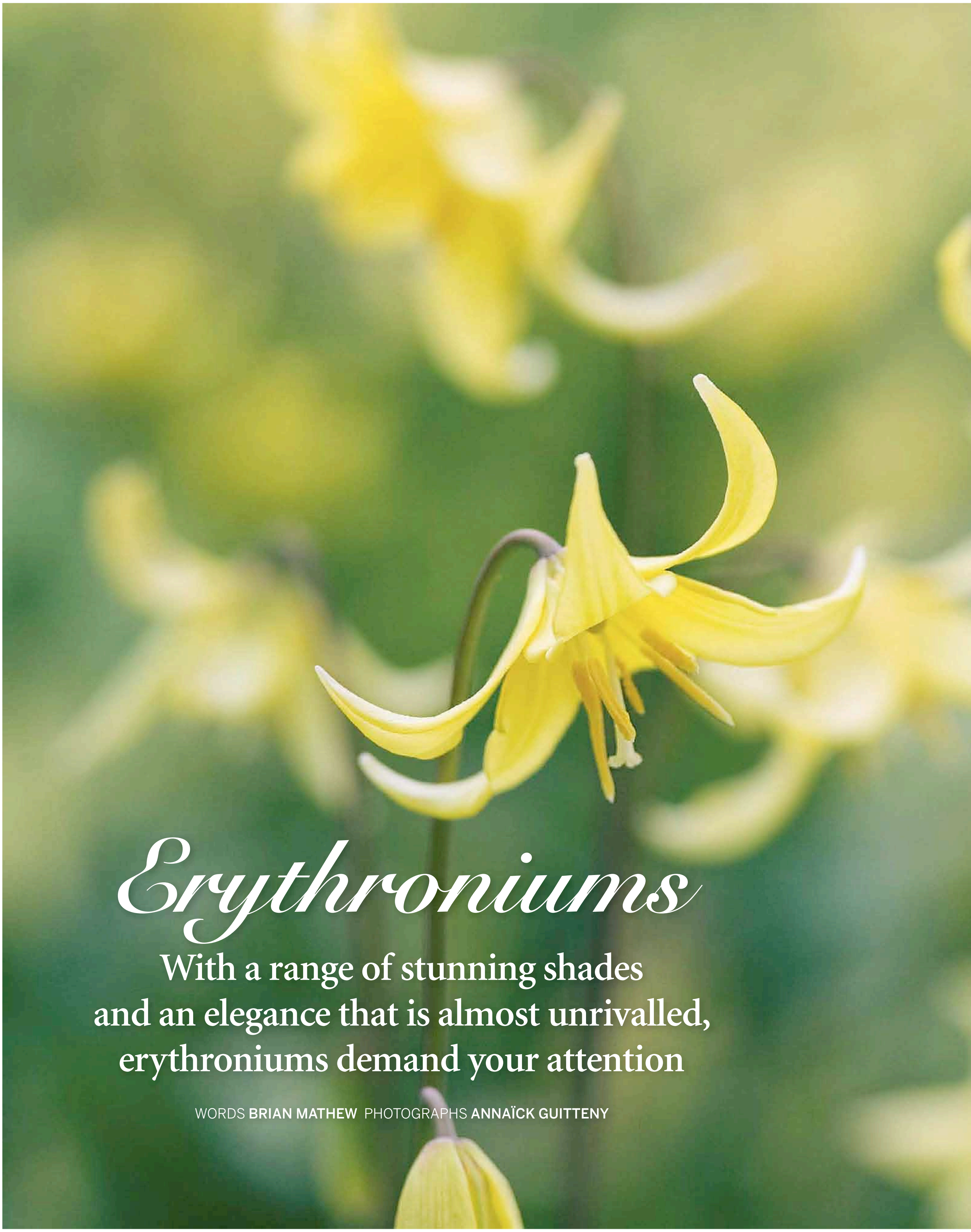
Egg-shaped cement bowl from Indian Ocean. Any pot that allows easy transplanting after flowering will be fine. www.indian-ocean.co.uk

NOTE: Quantities and plant sizes may vary, depending on container size and growing conditions.

Contact details

For more examples of Julia's work go to www.juliawylie.com





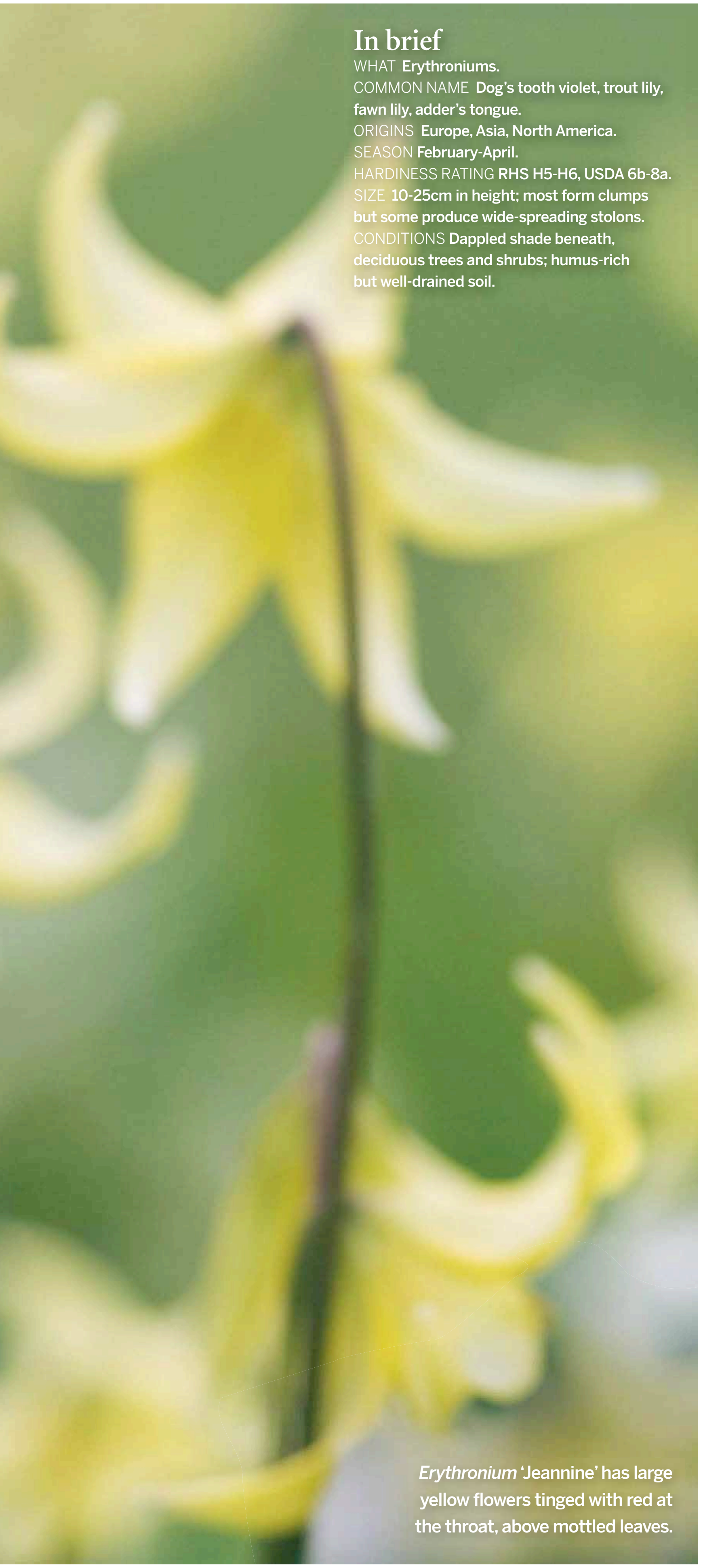
Erythroniums

With a range of stunning shades and an elegance that is almost unrivalled, erythroniums demand your attention

WORDS **BRIAN MATHEW** PHOTOGRAPHS **ANNAÏCK GUITTENY**

In brief

WHAT **Erythroniums.**
COMMON NAME **Dog's tooth violet, trout lily, fawn lily, adder's tongue.**
ORIGINS **Europe, Asia, North America.**
SEASON **February-April.**
HARDINESS RATING **RHS H5-H6, USDA 6b-8a.**
SIZE **10-25cm in height; most form clumps but some produce wide-spreading stolons.**
CONDITIONS **Dappled shade beneath, deciduous trees and shrubs; humus-rich but well-drained soil.**



Erythronium 'Jeannine' has large yellow flowers tinged with red at the throat, above mottled leaves.

PAUL DEBOIS / GAP PHOTOS

Brian Mathew worked for many years at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, as a plant taxonomist and bulb specialist. He has written several books on bulbs including *Crocus* and *Iris*.

Recently I enjoyed a talk by the plantsman Colin Crosbie in which he remarked on the graceful flowers of the dog's tooth violets. I fully agree, for these are surely among the most elegant of all bulbous plants – in fact one rare species is called *E. elegans*. Their value is enhanced by the range of colours, from white through yellow, to pink and purple, often with contrasting marks in the centre, and by the foliage. Each plant has just two leaves, which may be either glossy green or marked with conspicuous mottling.

Erythroniums represent a tour of the northern hemisphere, for they are distributed through North America, Europe and Asia. Their specific epithets alone highlight this geographical spread: *americanum, caucasicum, sibiricum, japonicum, californicum, oregonum…* To see them all – about 30 species – in their natural habitat would take years, but for the less adventurous there is a world of botanical travel to be found in the confines of the garden. Erythroniums are plants of woodlands and alpine meadows, never experiencing hot, dry conditions like their relatives the tulips. So they are ideal for slightly shaded places, beneath deciduous trees or shrubs in humus-rich, freely drained soil. For British gardens the lower altitude species are best, whereas those from higher meadows require cooler conditions that more northerly gardens can provide.

North American species

The species from western North America gives us the best garden subjects. One of the most frequently seen in gardens is *E. californicum* 'White Beauty', combining creamy-white flowers with nicely mottled foliage; this also increases vigorously to form clumps. A particularly large-flowered selection is 'Harvington Snowgoose'.

The robust *E. oregonum* is the most striking of all the whites, although it produces no offsets so needs increasing by seed. Two that were raised by the bulb guru EB Anderson many years ago have

▷

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*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.

▷ been named 'Jeanette Brickell' and 'Margaret Mathew'. Probably variants of *E. californicum*, the first is a clear white while the latter has a green tinge. 'Minnehaha' is a large-flowered white.

The yellow-flowered species from the western states fall into two categories: easy and difficult! Only one is easy-going, *E. tuolumnense* from California, and is among the most vigorous of all. It has glossy leaves and butter yellow flowers, often several to a stem, and increases rapidly by offsets. If you like a challenge, *E. grandiflorum* is like a refined alpine form of this, but needs cool conditions.

Only two species have colours outside the white/yellow range but they are important ones. The superb pink *E. revolutum* is ideal for naturalising in woodland, with pink flowers held over bronze-zoned foliage. 'Knightshayes' and Johnsonii Group are good selections and some hybrids have been raised that have *E. revolutum* in their family tree. The species occurs widely from California to Canada, often in the coastal forests.

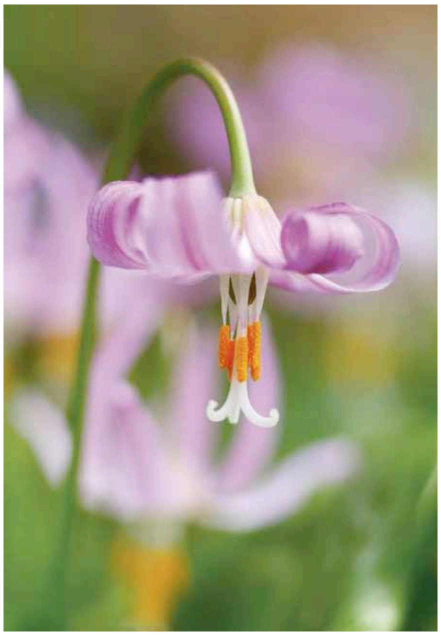
The Eastern states

The eastern North American erythroniums are less showy, with just one flower per stem and shy flowering. Both *E. americanum* and *E. albidum* are widespread, the former with yellow flowers stained bronze on the outside and the latter white marked outside with blue or grey speckling. The rarely seen *E. umbilicatum* is similar to *E. americanum* but flowers more freely. For these species choose a spot with sparse deciduous cover where sun filters through.

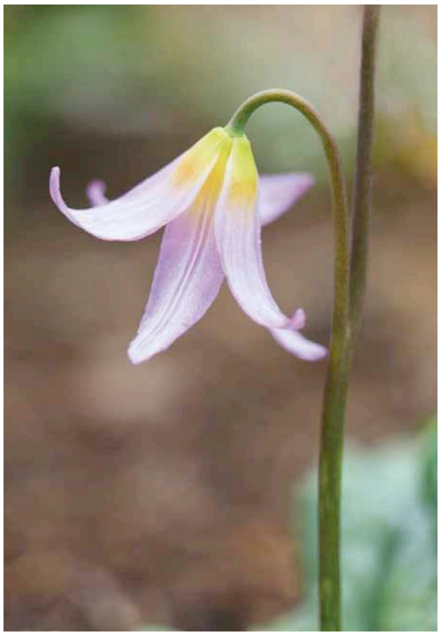
Eurasian species

The species occurring in Europe and Asia are the true dog's tooth violet *E. dens-canis* and its relatives. It is delightful, with oval, brown-purple mottled leaves and variable purple, pink, violet or occasionally white flowers, marked inside with contrasting zones and jagged markings. With this amount of variation many cultivars have been selected, among them 'Frans Hals', 'Rose Queen' and 'Snowflake'. The creamy white-flowered *E. caucasicum* from farther east is a worthwhile variation as it is often the first to flower and is easy to grow. □

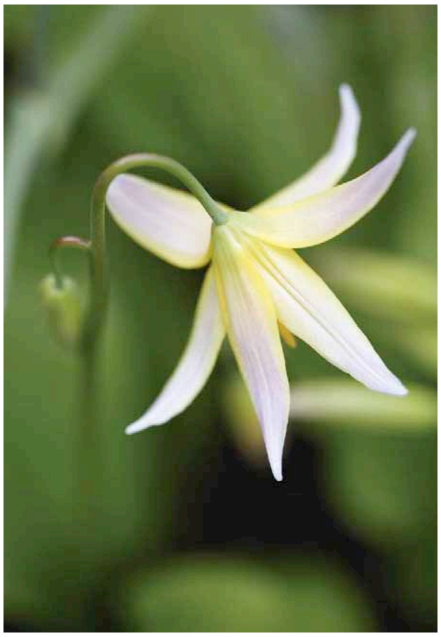
• Brian's pick of erythroniums continues over the next six pages



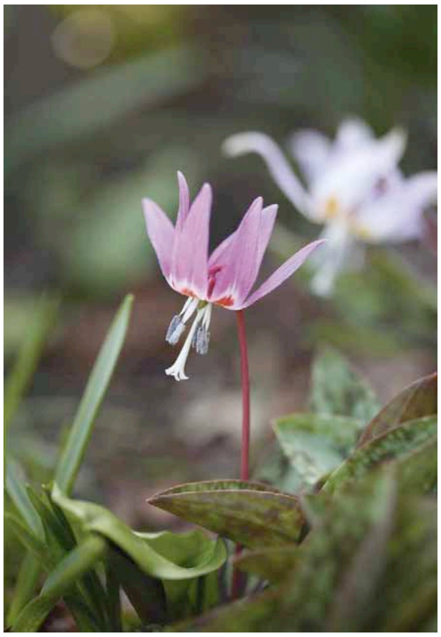
ERYTHRONIUM REVOLUTUM
The only really pink-flowered species and a superb garden plant. It does particularly well in the damper climate of gardens in western Britain. It is very variable in depth of flower colour and in the mottled leaf markings. AGM*.



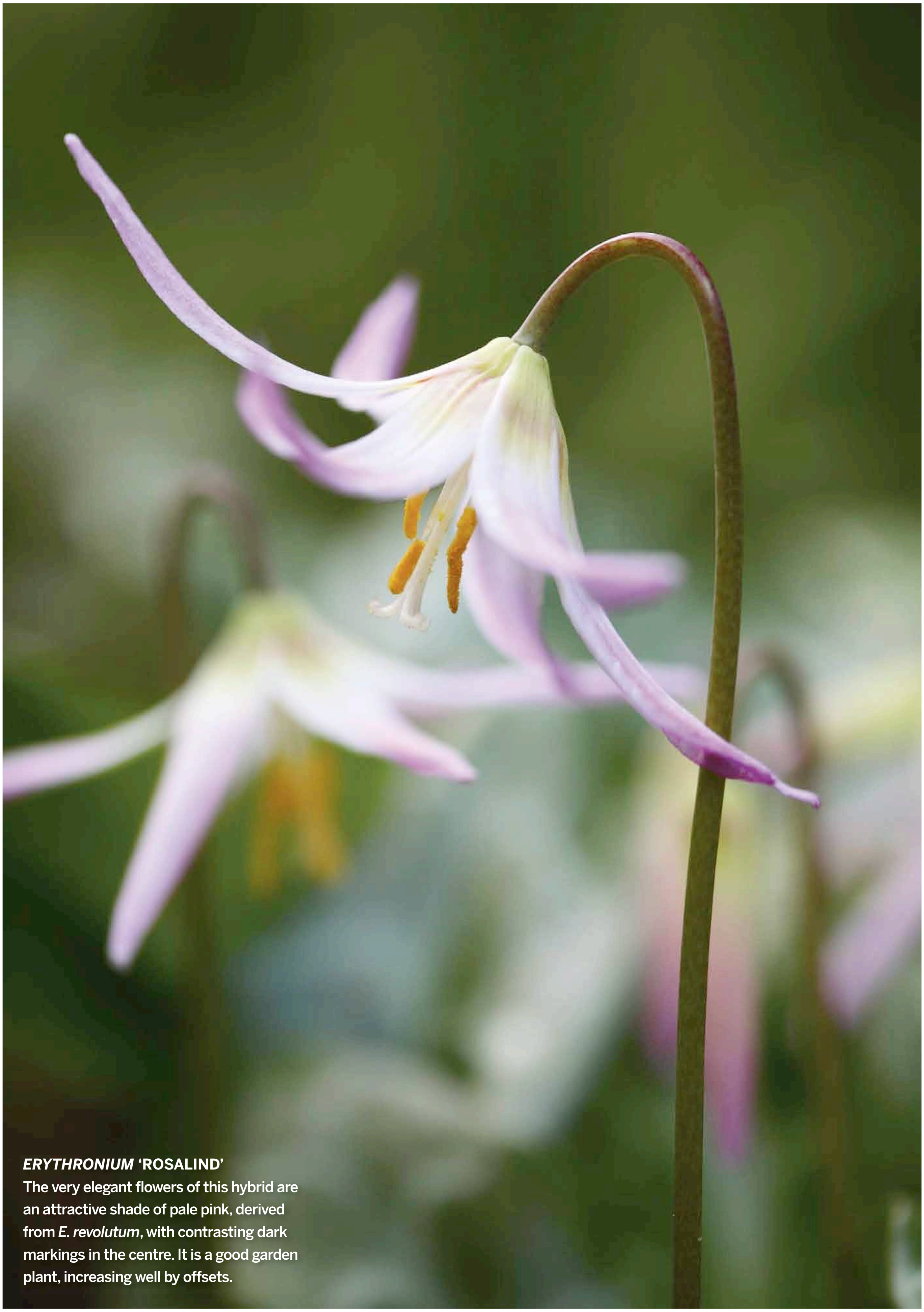
***ERYTHRONIUM* 'KINFAUNS PINK'**
Several selections of the variable *E. revolutum* have been named and some hybrids are also now available. These all reveal the influence of the species in their pink-suffused flowers and they inherit the vigour of the parent species. *E.* 'Kinfauns Pink' is a good example.



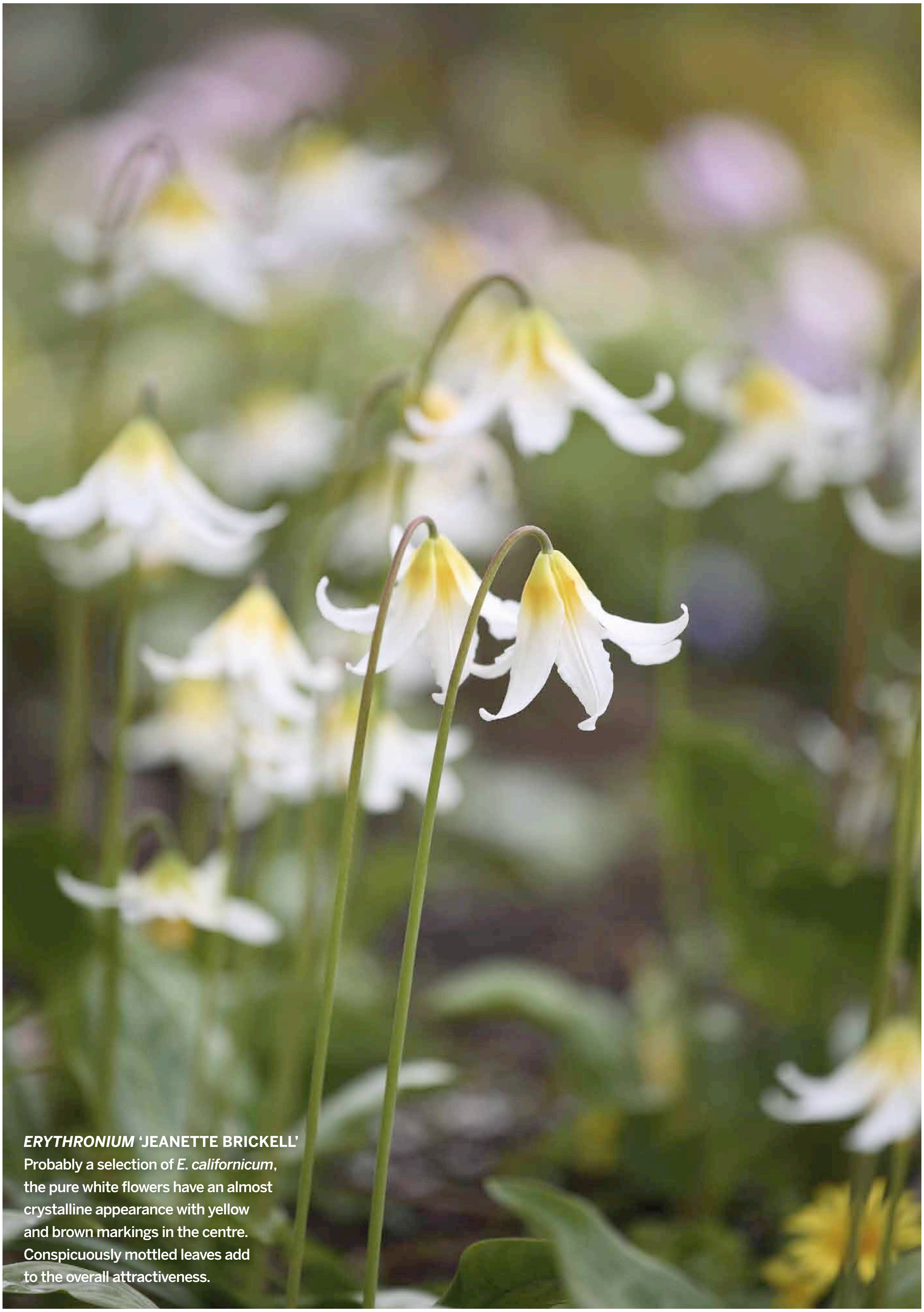
***ERYTHRONIUM* 'JOANNA'**
An interesting Dutch hybrid cultivar, named for a family member of bulb company Jacques Amand International Ltd. It shows a colour combination of tints revealing the influence of pink *E. revolutum* and yellow *E. tuolumnense*. It increases well and is free-flowering.



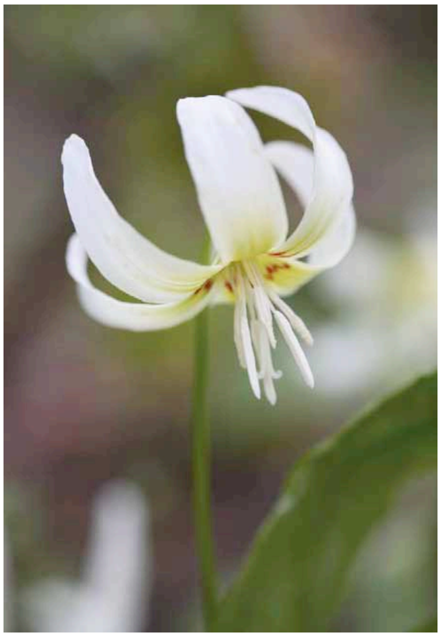
ERYTHRONIUM DENS-CANIS
This is the true European dog's tooth violet, recommended by the early herbalists to 'put in children's pottage against worms of the belly', and as an aphrodisiac! There are several named cultivars, all equally attractive. AGM.



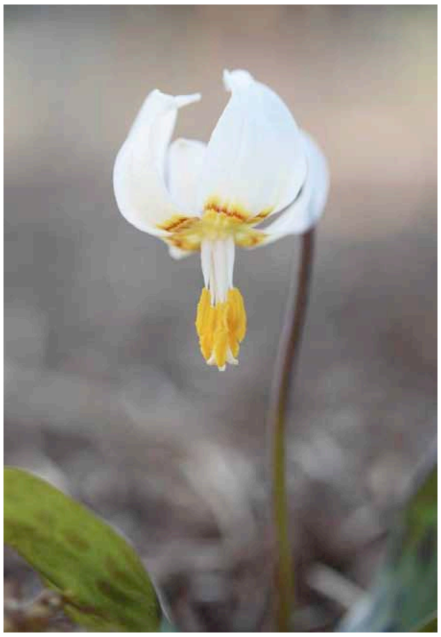
ERYTHRONIUM **'ROSALIND'**
The very elegant flowers of this hybrid are an attractive shade of pale pink, derived from *E. revolutum*, with contrasting dark markings in the centre. It is a good garden plant, increasing well by offsets.



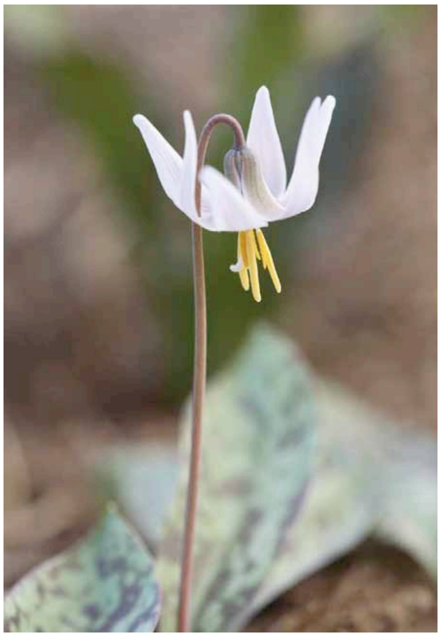
ERYTHRONIUM **'JEANETTE BRICKELL'**
Probably a selection of *E. californicum*, the pure white flowers have an almost crystalline appearance with yellow and brown markings in the centre. Conspicuously mottled leaves add to the overall attractiveness.



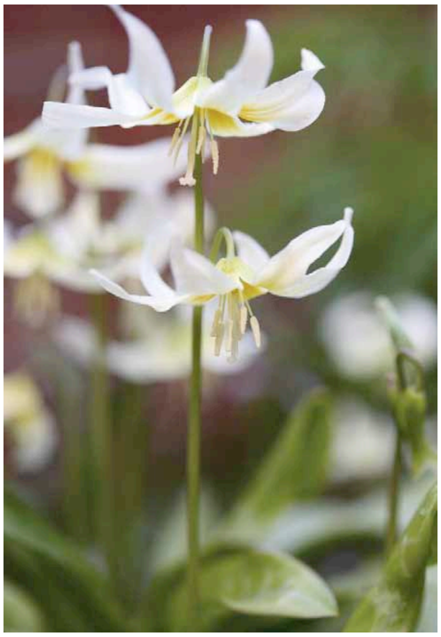
***ERYTHRONIUM CALIFORNICUM* 'WHITE BEAUTY'**
Arguably the best white-flowered species for ease of cultivation and rate of increase. The white stamens with slender filaments distinguish it from *E. oregonum*. This cultivar was named by the American nurseryman Carl Purdy in the early 20th century. AGM.



ERYTHRONIUM OREGONUM
A robust, large-flowered and very elegant species from the western USA and Canada. It is distinguished from other white-flowered species by the yellow stamens with flattened filaments. The contrasting markings in the centre vary considerably.



ERYTHRONIUM ALBIDUM
A low-growing, widespread species in eastern Canada and the USA. It may be described as having modest charm, notable for the attractive greyish, mottled leaves and blue to greyish suffusion on the flowers.



***ERYTHRONIUM* 'MARGARET MATHEW'**
Although alleged to be a cross between *E. californicum* and *E. tuolumnense* this appears rather to be a selection of the former. The flower has a green suffusion when in bud and early flowering stage.

Cultivation

- Erythroniums are normally offered in the autumn bulb catalogues and on arrival should be planted without delay. Unlike many bulbs they have no protective 'jackets' and are therefore prone to drying out if left exposed. Their dog's tooth shape might cause confusion as to which way up they go, so just remember to place them with the more pointed end upwards and with at least 6cm of soil above the tip.
- Although needing plenty of moisture in the spring growing season, they need to be dryer when dormant, so waterlogged soils are unsuitable. To provide good drainage and adequate moisture seems a contradiction but this can be achieved using plenty of humus and sharp sand if the soil is really heavy. One might resort to building a slightly raised bed for them or planting on a slope, both of which allow excess water to drain away.
- Once planted it is best to leave them alone to build up into clumps as this is how they are most effective. If they become too crowded, lift them in late summer, divide and move to a newly prepared site. The only other aftercare required is a sprinkling of potash-rich fertiliser in autumn and early spring.
- Late frosts can cause leaf tips and buds to be malformed and dry periods in spring may cause buds to shrivel.

Planting companions

Erythroniums combine well with a range of other woodlanders such as hellebores, *Anemone nemorosa* cultivars and the yellow-flowered *A. ranunculoides*, trilliums and *Dicentra formosa*. Slightly later there are other fascinating woodlanders such as the Solomon's seals, *Polygonatum*. For the summer months there is a large range of *Lilium* species, and their generally easier-to-grow garden hybrids, that enjoy the same sort of conditions. The late summer toad lilies, *Tricyrtis hirta* and *T. formosana*, are also choice subjects for similar conditions. One might also incorporate colchicums, but keep them well apart as their foliage would swamp the erythroniums in spring.

Where to buy

- Ballyrogan Nurseries, Ballyrogan, Newtownards, Co Down, N. Ireland BT23 4SD. Tel (028) 9181 0451
- Jacques Amand International, The Nurseries, Clamp Hill, Stanmore, Middlesex HA7 3JS. Tel 020 8420 7110, www.jacquesamandintl.com
- Long Acre Plants, South Marsh, Charlton Musgrave, Nr. Wincanton, Somerset BA9 8EX. Tel 01963 32802, www.longacreplants.co.uk
- Pottertons Nursery, Moortown Road, Nettleton, Caistor, Lincs LN7 6HX. Tel 01472 851714, www.pottertons.co.uk
- Twelve Nuns, 16 Carisbrook Grove, Stamford, Lincolnshire PE9 2GF. Tel 01778 590455, www.twelvenunns.co.uk. Or email: penny@twelvenunns.co.uk.
- Wildside Nursery, Green Lane, Buckland Monachorum, Yelverton, Devon PL20 7NP. Tel 01822 855 755, ww.wileyatwildside.com

Where to see

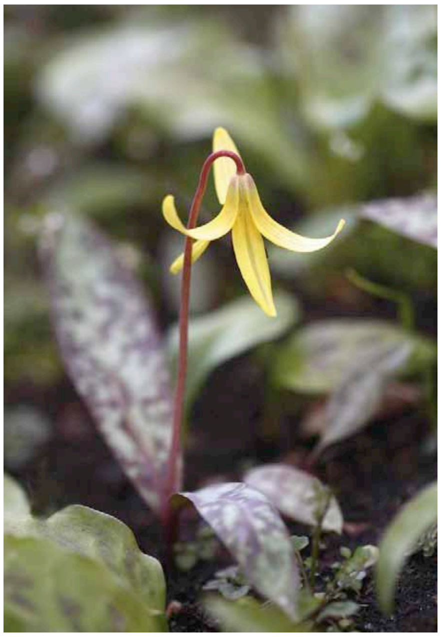
- Inverewe Garden, Poolewe, Ross-shire, Scotland IV22 2LG. Tel 0844 493 2225, www.nts.org.uk
- Knightshayes Court, Bolham, Tiverton EX16 7RQ. Tel 01884 257381, www.nationaltrust.org.uk
- RHS Garden, Wisley, Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB (also running an Erythronium Trial 2012-2014). Tel 0845 260 9000, www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/wisley
- Savill Garden, Wick Lane, Englefield Green, Surrey TW20 0UU. Tel 01753 860222, www.theroyallandscape.co.uk

Further information

'The Genus Erythronium'. Brian Mathew in *Quarterly Bulletin of the Alpine Garden Society* Vol. 66, No. 3: 308-322 (1998).

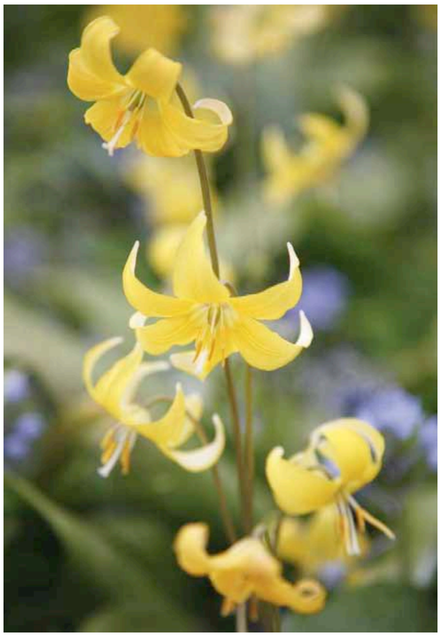
Bulbs by Roger Phillips and Martyn Rix. Pan Garden Plants Series, Macmillan (1989).

Information and illustrations on the website of the Scottish Rock Garden Club www.srgc.org.uk/monthfeature/april2006/content.html



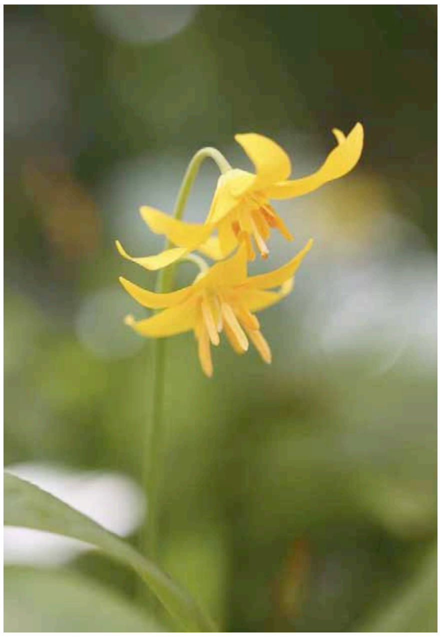
ERYTHRONIUM AMERICANUM

A 'trout lily' from the eastern North American states, which wanders far and wide from its planting site by producing stolons. The flowers need a warm day if they are to open and reveal the cinnamon coloured stamens.



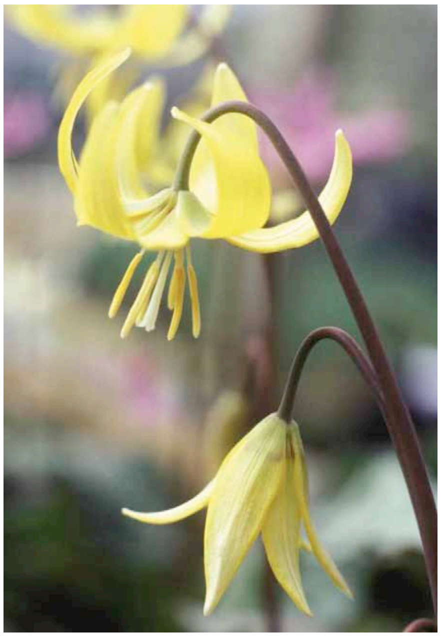
***ERYTHRONIUM* 'PAGODA'**

The sulphur yellow flowers of 'Pagoda' are the result of crossing yellow *E. tuolumnense* with 'White Beauty'. It inherits brown interior markings from the latter, although these soon disappear. 'Pagoda' is one of the most robust of all erythroniums and a rapid increaser by offsets. AGM.



ERYTHRONIUM TUOLUMNENSE

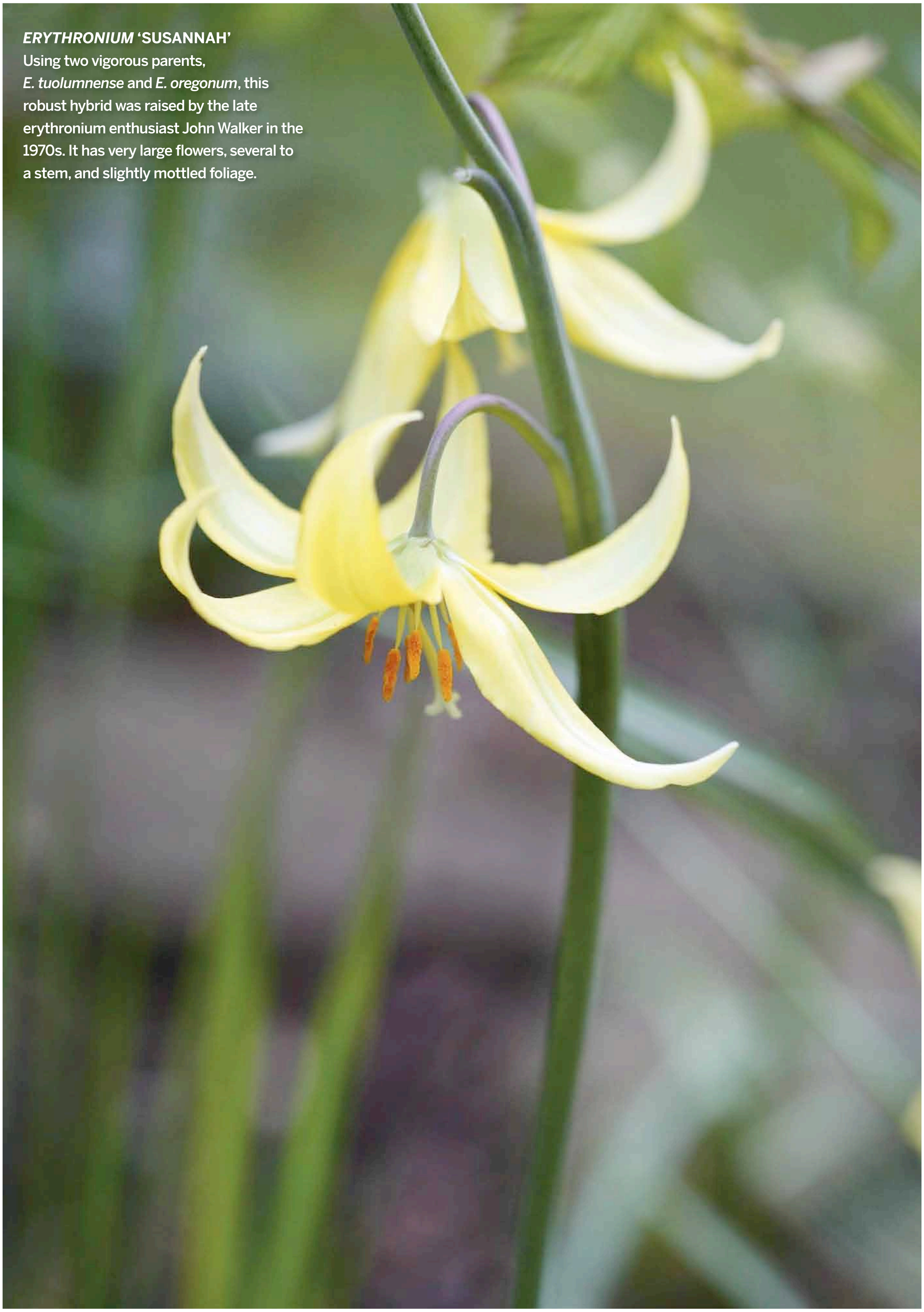
There are several yellow-flowered species but this is the only one that is a good, easy garden plant in Britain, soon increasing into clumps. It is named after the Tuolumne River in California. AGM.



SARAH CUTTLE / GAP PHOTOS

***ERYTHRONIUM* 'SUNDISC'**

Another vigorous hybrid of *E. tuolumnense* with, almost certainly, *E.* 'White Beauty'. It has paler yellow flowers than the former and these have brownish markings in the centre indicating the influence of the latter. The foliage has faint mottling.



ERYTHRONIUM **'SUSANNAH'**
Using two vigorous parents, *E. tuolumnense* and *E. oregonum*, this robust hybrid was raised by the late erythronium enthusiast John Walker in the 1970s. It has very large flowers, several to a stem, and slightly mottled foliage.

Alexis Datta

The head gardener at Sissinghurst will soon be moving on to gardens new, but is justly proud of her stewardship

WORDS JODIE JONES PORTRAIT CHARLIE HOPKINSON

Alexis Datta is about to walk away from one of the best jobs in horticulture. The Sissinghurst head gardener is taking early retirement after 30 years working for the National Trust, and she has mixed feelings about it.

She is looking forward to creating a new garden from scratch, combined with some consultancy and lecturing, but is very conscious of all she is leaving behind. "It will be a huge wrench to go – this is my home as well as my work – but I won't miss the politics!"

Lex, as everyone calls her, remembers that even as a child she didn't like people telling her what to do. Which makes it rather surprising that she chose a career caring for gardens belonging to others. Yet she was only ten when she decided she wanted to be a gardener. "My parents were both academics and terribly clever, but they were quite happy when they saw I was serious about horticulture. My mother gave me a bed of my own in our west London garden and I used to order flowers from the catalogues. I was particularly fond of wallflowers, as I recall, and I had a wonderful cotoneaster."

At the age of 17 she took an apprenticeship with the Greater London Council. "It was predominantly a male world, but no one minded the girls," she says. "There weren't many my age, but I worked alongside a number of older women who had come to gardening through the Land Army and didn't want to go back to their old lives at the end of the war."

Lex spent time working in Battersea Park, Holland Park and Kensington Gardens before enrolling on a certificate course at Pershore College. "I saw it as a way out of London, as much as anything. I had mixed feelings about the course itself – as usual, anything involving teaching brings out my bolshy side. But I did meet my partner, Jacqui, on the Pershore course and we're still together."

In fact, as well as living together ever since, the two women have often worked together and are now retiring together. For some time Jacqui has been chief propagator at Sissinghurst and Lex proudly points out that plant sales last year raised £72,000, which went straight back into running the gardens. "I think Jacqui retiring is going to have more of an impact on the garden than me leaving!" she says.

From Pershore, Lex went to work for Philip Cotton at Cliveden. "I suppose Phil was my first mentor, and I got great all-round experience at Cliveden. I was very happy there, but when I wanted to move up a rung there wasn't a space, so I began to look around."

This was in 1990 when, after nearly 40 years at Sissinghurst, Pamela Schwerdt and Sibylle Kreutzberger retired. They had been appointed by Vita Sackville-West herself, and went on to manage the transition from private garden to National Trust property after her death, so when the post of head gardener was advertised, it was headline news.

"I didn't really think I had enough experience but I've always had a passion for the garden, so there seemed no harm in having a go," says Lex. She lost out on the top slot to Sarah Cook, who had gardened at Sissinghurst under Pam and Sibylle. "But then Sarah asked me to be her deputy, and I've been here ever since."

With an unbroken succession running from Vita to Pam and Sibylle, then on to Sarah and Lex, there has been a continuity at Sissinghurst that would be unusual in any circumstance these days, but is almost unheard of in a public garden. "There is a unique atmosphere here," says Lex. "Vita has always been my biggest inspiration, and I think all our gardeners feel the same."

"When I became head gardener in 2005 Sarah told me to keep up with all the latest fashions in gardening and then ignore them. That doesn't mean we don't innovate – I'm always trying out new plants – but we stay true to the spirit of the garden." The trouble with running one of the most famous gardens in the world is that everyone has an opinion about what that spirit is. Lex and her team (who call her 'the best boss you could have') are clearly hurt by the brickbats that critics hurl around.

"It has to be tidy, because of the massive visitor numbers, but I'm proud we've brought back a bit of informality where we can, in areas such as the orchard. When I hear people complain that it's too perfect I just tell myself they are jealous," says Lex. "I've got seven gardeners, one apprentice, 15 year-round volunteers, and two groups who come in just to deadhead the roses. It's rare to have enough staff to do everything properly, but I do."

"I'm actually glad I didn't come here when I was younger. Anywhere else would be a disappointment after Sissinghurst."

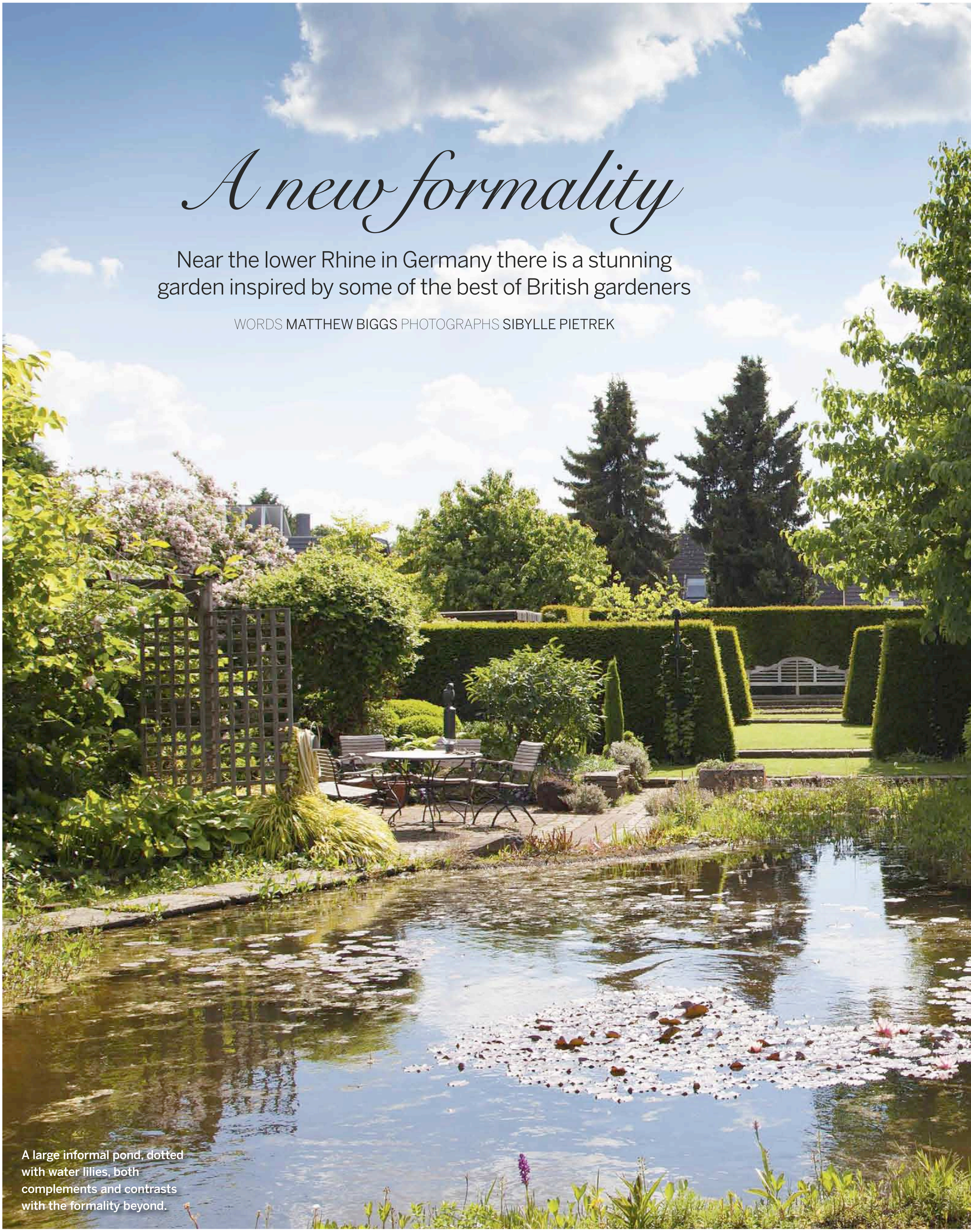
NEXT MONTH James Priest, Giverny's head gardener

> *"Vita has always been my biggest inspiration, and I think all our gardeners feel the same"*

A new formality

Near the lower Rhine in Germany there is a stunning garden inspired by some of the best of British gardeners

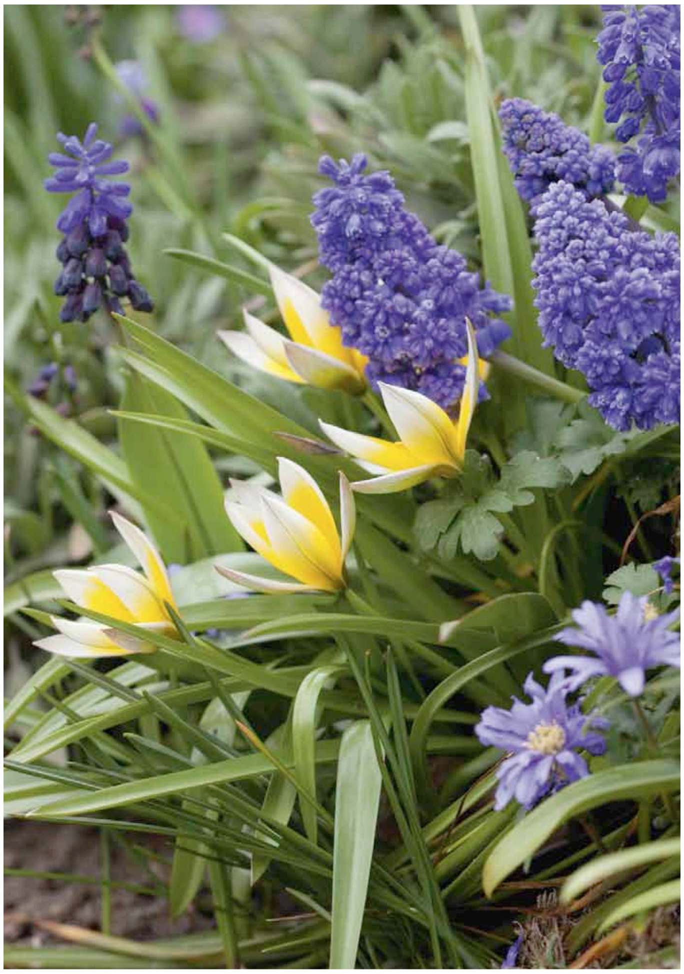
WORDS **MATTHEW BIGGS** PHOTOGRAPHS **SIBYLLE PIETREK**

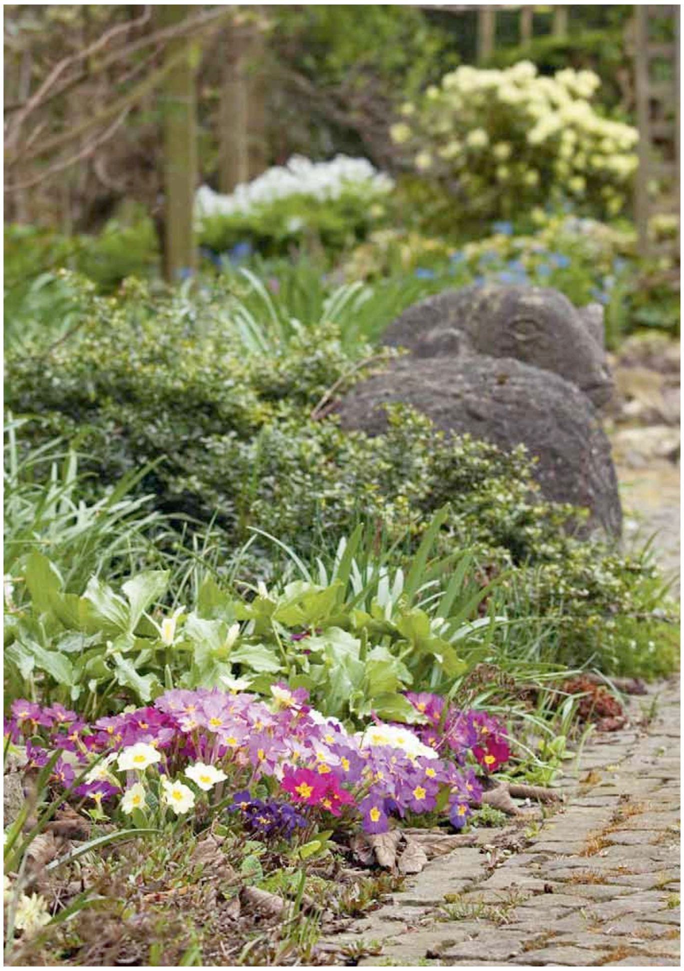


A large informal pond, dotted with water lilies, both complements and contrasts with the formality beyond.

In brief

WHAT A fusion of formal and informal styles with an interesting array of plants.
WHERE Krefeld, Lower Rhine, Germany.
SIZE 1,200 square metres.
CLIMATE Mild maritime, with occasional harsh winters.
HARDINESS RATING RHS H4, USDA 8b-9a.
SOIL Fertile loam.
POINTS OF INTEREST Secret garden, a formal area and an array of desirable spring flowers.





KEY INFLUENCES

Christopher Lloyd
"Because he ripped out his rose garden and replanted, encouraging me to take risks and be more adventurous."

Vita Sackville-West at Sissinghurst
"The garden is outstanding for its structure and abundance of plants – just the style I am aiming for."

Derry Watkins
"I admire her flair, original ideas and imaginative use of new plants and annuals."

Penelope Hobhouse
"Tintinhull is inspirational for its garden 'rooms', serenity and structure – particularly the pool garden, plus the variety of textured leaves."

Merriments Nursery
"There is so much to learn from their use of colour and structure in the show gardens."

A large comfortable chair in the lounge, facing a vast patio window, marks the main axis of Adelheid Klinke's garden. "It is perfectly placed so I can feel part of the garden, even on the worst winter days," she explains. The view, over an informal pond, whose reflections draw the ever changing skyscape into the heart of the garden, is firmly anchored by a series of razor sharp yew hedges and a large Lutyens seat, creating a vista that focuses the eye, unerringly, on the formal area beyond. The aim of the design was to use the rigid hedges and stillness of the pond to create a sense of peace and tranquillity. Yet despite the overriding aura of serenity and evergreen formality, this is a garden with a hidden side. Under trees, hedges, in niches, borders and wrapped in the confines of a 'secret garden', there is a remarkable collection of colourful spring flowers.

"Before we took over, in 1980, my father-in-law's garden had been a vast vegetable plot; during the war, the whole family and an aunt survived on garden produce and he wanted it to stay that way. I had no interest in or time for gardening, so nothing was done until my father-in-law died," Adelheid recalls. "The first change was to create the large pond, then, realising a need for inspiration and ideas, my husband and I took several holidays, visiting the gardens of England, for its strong tradition of gardening and love of plants. We didn't know formality until we visited our first garden, Sissinghurst, followed by Great Dixter, Pashley Manor and Tintinhull; successive holidays changed our lives, until we knew exactly the style we wanted."

Adelheid discussed her ideas with a garden designer, who created a formal area beyond the fluid lines of the pond. "As soon as the first yew was planted the impact was immediate – it just felt right; I am not a designer but a plantswoman – now I could start planting. The late Christopher Lloyd, Derry Watkins and the garden at Merriments filled me with ideas; I love texture, structure and colour but I am also an avid collector of rare and unusual plants. Combining both passions can be extremely challenging."

There are more than 60 forms of snowdrop in the garden, among them *Galanthus* 'Lady Beatrix Stanley' with prim, tight, double flowers, *G.* 'Silverwells', a large-flowered Scottish selection with narrow grey-green foliage and *G. elwesii* var. *monostictus* 'H. Purcell', bearing large, elegant flowers found in Lisse, Holland. Some are bought from the annual snowdrop festivals at Oirlicher Blumengarten in nearby Nettetal and the Sneeuwklokjesfeest at de Boschhove in the Netherlands, but many are generous gifts. "Mention that you would like a plant at our plant group and it immediately turns up! I said I'd like to grow early flowering *Galanthus reginae-olgae* 'Cambridge' and two days later a friend turned up at the front door with some. Soon I will be giving them away, too," she smiles.

A collection of over 25 forms of

Continued on page 58 ▷

Top left *Tulipa tarda* decked in cheerful yellow and cream, creates a display of diminutive elegance.

Top right Bearded iris lend a statuesque elegance to the edge of the border.

Bottom left Pretty *Primula vulgaris* cultivars bring a burst of vibrant colour to the garden.

Bottom right The frizzy double flowers of *Muscari armenaicum* 'Blue Spike' are an exuberant study in form and texture.

The garden is a triumph of texture from its cobbled paths to the tightly clipped hedging.

Right Rare and desirable *Cercis canadensis* f. *alba* 'Royal White', is delicately dusted in white flowers, a perfect contrast to the dark yew hedge.

The concentric terracing around the formal pool is carpeted with fragrant thyme.

▷ *Anemone*, mainly *Anemone nemorosa*, is scattered around the garden. The cultivar 'Robinsoniana' with wisteria blue flowers is prominent, but careful scrutiny reveals *Anemone nemorosa* 'Virescens', the 'flowers', a long-lasting ruff of tiny green leaves and clear, ice-white, double-flowered 'Vestal'; *Anemone* x *lipsiensis* with blooms of soft yellow, is a particular favourite. Other dainties include *Hacquetia epipactis* 'Thor', its creamy-white variegation combining to perfection with the glaucous leaves of snowdrops and the small 'hosta'-like leaves of *Maianthemum bifolium*, while *Paris quadrifolia* is an ideal contrast to the mounds of small, pleated leaves of *Polygonatum humile* and the evergreen leaves of *Speirantha convallarioides*.

Choice plants include rarities such as *Trillium grandiflorum* f. *polymerum* 'Snowbunting', with sumptuous, pure white double flowers, *Podophyllum versipelle* 'Spotty Dotty', a quirky, smile-inducing plant with large mottled leaves, and *Podophyllum hexandrum*, its pale pink flowers followed by bright red fruits. *Disporum sessile* 'Variegatum' with white striped variegation on the leaves looks spectacular in spring, as the erect young stems emerge.

"My aim is to find the perfect plants for each different area of the garden, from dry shade under the large trees to the rockery and bog garden by the pond," says Adelheid. Plants are constantly being added – there is always room for more. "In spring, I am up every day, at dawn, impatient to see what's appearing. The garden is my greatest pleasure. I could sell the house but to part with the garden? Now that would be extremely difficult!" □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Garden opening dates 2013

A scheme called Tag der Offenen Gartenpforte covers the whole area and the opening dates for this garden are 25/26 May, 22/23 June and 20/21 July. Otherwise open by appointment.

Flensburger Zeile 26,
47829 Krefeld, Germany.
Tel +49 (0)2151 473827

Snowdrop Festivals

The two festivals mentioned by Frau Klinke take place each year in February.

- Oirlicher Blumengarten, Nettetal. www.oirlicher-blumengarten.de
- de Boschhoeve Sneeuwklokjesfeest, www.dinekelogtenberg.nl

8 of Frau Klinke's spring favourites

1 ***Hacquetia epipactis***
February flowering, with a perfect mound of extraordinary green inflorescences. It provides plenty of seedlings to give away. AGM*.

2 ***Scoliopus bigelowii***
Beautiful flowers – we bought one from renowned nurseryman Elizabeth Strangman, for a respected plantsman friend. Good enough for them? It will be for us!

3 ***Helleborus multifidus* subsp. *hercegovinus***
The emerging leaves open, revealing up to one hundred or more leaflets.

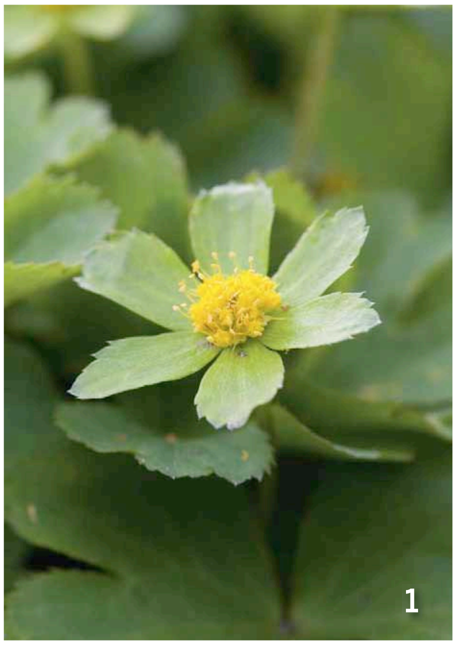
4 ***Podophyllum versipelle* 'Spotty Dotty'**
Fantastic leaves, variegated, deeply lobed, puckered and held high. A hybrid, so it's a strong grower and completely hardy here although it looks very exotic. Dark red drooping flowers are a bonus.

5 ***Glaucidium palmatum***
Soft divided leaves with a lovely texture and slightly nodding, lilac or white flowers. I find it impossible to resist. AGM.

6 ***Muscari macrocarpum* 'Golden Fragrance'**
Grows reliably in the rockery, pushes through cushion plants, adding lovely glaucous bluegreen leaves and an overwhelming scent that would fill a whole room.

7 ***Paris quadrifolia***
Easy to grow with an angular architectural presence – the perfect ground cover for difficult areas in shade.

8 ***Trillium cuneatum***
The leaf patterns are exquisite, and the deep maroon flowers a joy. It eventually forms a large clump.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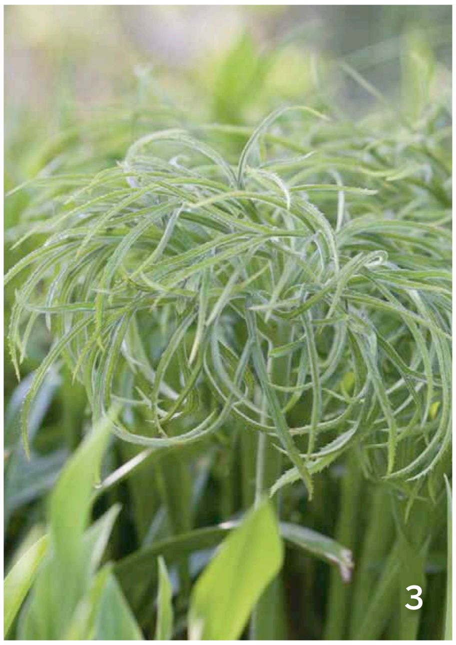
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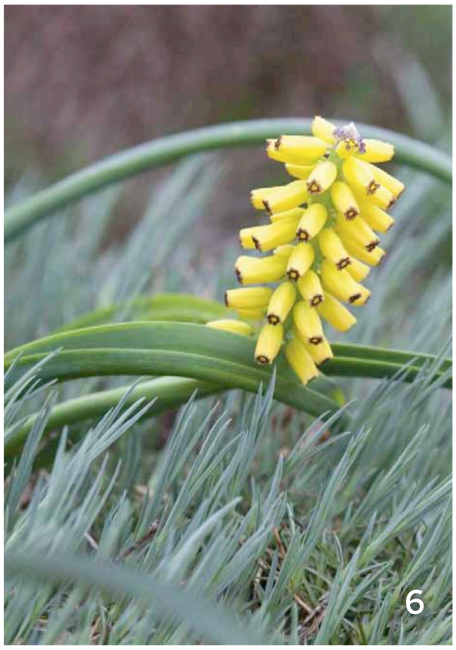
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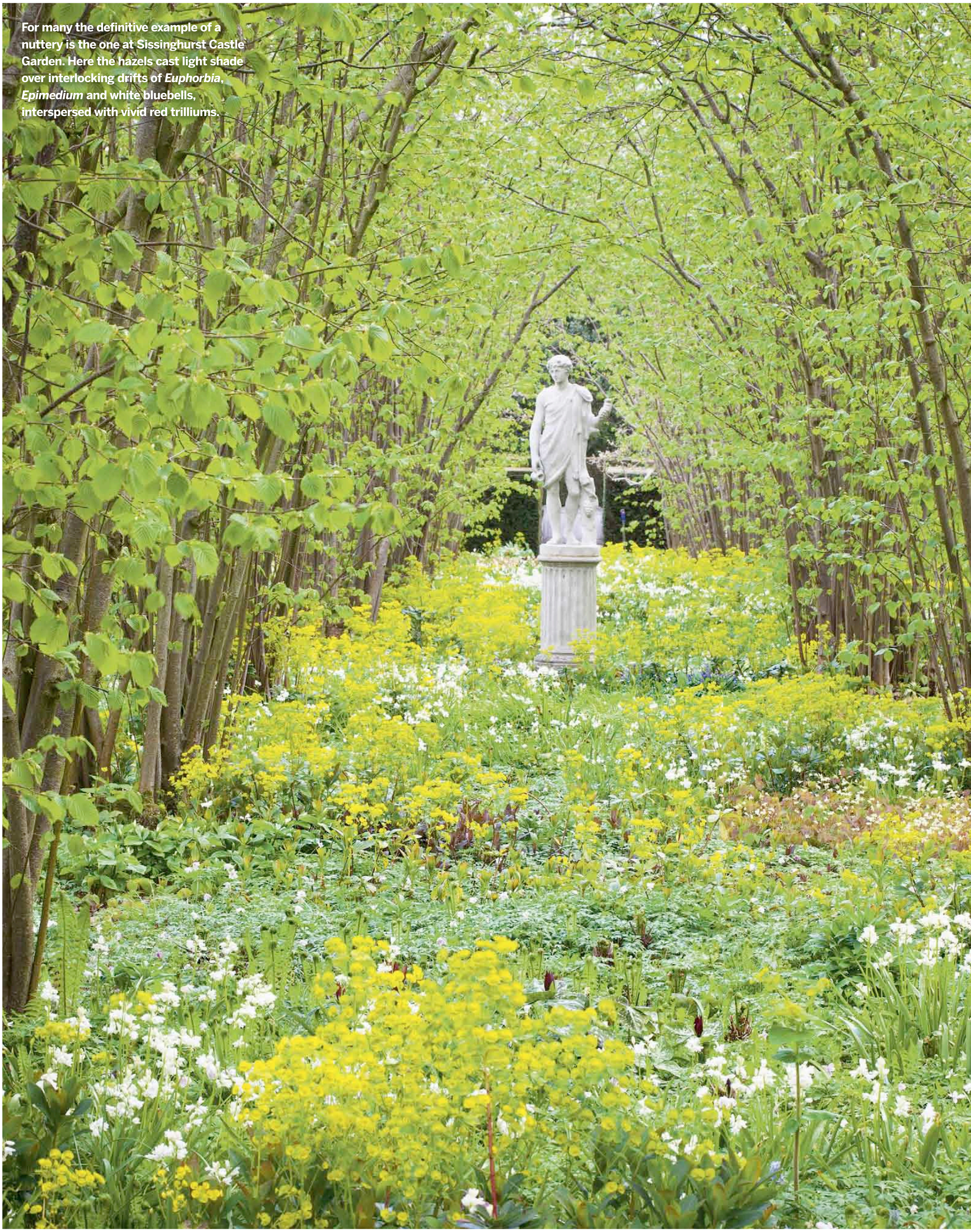
* HOLDS AN AWARD OF GARDEN MERIT FROM THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY



For many the definitive example of a nuttery is the one at Sissinghurst Castle Garden. Here the hazels cast light shade over interlocking drifts of *Euphorbia*, *Epimedium* and white bluebells, interspersed with vivid red trilliums.

Nutteries

Feel like a change from traditional shrub planting? A richly planted, naturalistic nuttery could be just the thing

WORDS NIGEL DUNNETT PHOTOGRAPHS JONATHAN BUCKLEY

Nigel Dunnett is Professor of Planting Design at the University of Sheffield, integrating ecology with horticulture to create dramatic naturalistic plantings.

Among the things that first inspired me to begin my journey into naturalistic planting design were the wildflowers in the coppiced woodlands of Kent, my childhood county. The sheer scale of the extensive sheets of flowers; the exuberance of the colours; the intimate detail of the perennials and bulbs and the way they interacted with the multi-stemmed woody plants were all fascinating to me. Indeed, so deeply ingrained was this impression that my very first experiments in 'dynamic planting' were based upon designed versions of coppiced woodlands, as a perfect way to integrate woody plants with perennials, to create an alternative to turgid shrub plantings. The process of coppicing is the key to that dynamism: periodically cutting the trees or shrubs enables light and warmth to reach ground level, and regularly rejuvenates the whole planting, allowing a sumptuous diversity of perennials to be incorporated.

Inspired by Jekyll

Nut walks or nutteries came to the fore as features of Arts and Crafts gardens. Gertrude Jekyll created a nut walk at her home at Munstead Wood in Surrey. Jekyll's nut walk subsequently inspired Vita Sackville-West to create the nuttery at Sissinghurst Castle in Kent, a vibrant tapestry of flowers beneath hazels. This was later replanted using a wider range of woodland perennials and is now, to my mind, the best example of naturalistic woodland 'ground flora' planting to be found anywhere. Drifts of spreading perennials interweave beneath the hazels, as bulbs emerge throughout. But what makes the Sissinghurst nuttery special is the restraint: only yellows and whites (with just the scattered crimson of *Trillium sessile* breaking this rule) are used among the vivid fresh symphony of greens. Accentuating and contrasting with the informality at ground level is the regular grid of hazels above, at rigid five-metre spacings, and a single straight stone path running off-centre through the nuttery. This is a great example of combining order and formality with loose naturalism.

To create a new nuttery, plant the trees up to five metres apart. There is no limit on how many can be used – a single tree can be used in a corner, but growing in groups will produce more nuts. Soil should be well prepared and rich in organic material, and bare-root trees will establish quickly. Coppice whenever is appropriate to the size – five to seven years is standard.

Planting options

Planting options are very wide. Native wildflowers such as primroses, anemones, red campion, celandines and bluebells are really only just the start. A spectacular North American mix of white and pink tiarellas, with the heavily and delightfully scented mauve and purple *Phlox divaricata*, red *Aquilegia canadensis*, along with trilliums, will do exactly the same job. I have used extensive areas of oxlips (*Primula elatior*) with hazels, with pink *Corydalis solida* and shimmering blue *Omphalodes* and *Pulmonaria*. The trick is to be bold and use large numbers of a well-selected narrow range of species in the planting, mixing in bulbs with the perennials, and incorporating self-seeders such as *Smyrnium perfoliatum*.

Use winter-greens such as epimediums, wood rushes and *Arum italicum* 'Marmoratum'. *Aster divaricatus* and cyclamen bring autumn highlights. Add honeysuckles and wild roses for a real woodland edge effect. Filbert (*Corylus maxima* 'Purpurea') looks fantastic with fresh green ferns, blue *Geranium sylvaticum* and *Anthriscus* 'Raven's Wing'. □

- Turn the page for Nigel's favourite plants suitable for a nuttery.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available

1 ***Epimedium* x *versicolor* 'Sulphureum'**
Epimediums are wonderful multi-season ground cover plants for shade. The flowers dance above a carpet of leaves that are bronze-tinted in spring, autumn and winter. H 30cm S 50cm. AGM* RHS H4, USDA 8b-9a[†].

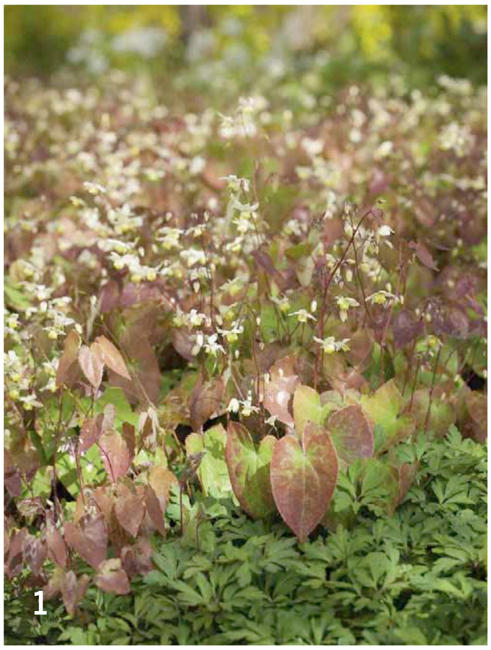
2 ***Hyacinthoides non-scripta* 'Alba'**
Best for woodland fragrance The bluebell epitomises the glory of British woodlands in spring, and scents the air with its heavy perfume. This white form brings grace, delicacy, and wonderful illumination to shady places. Plant in groups among perennials and it will spread. H 30cm S 20cm.

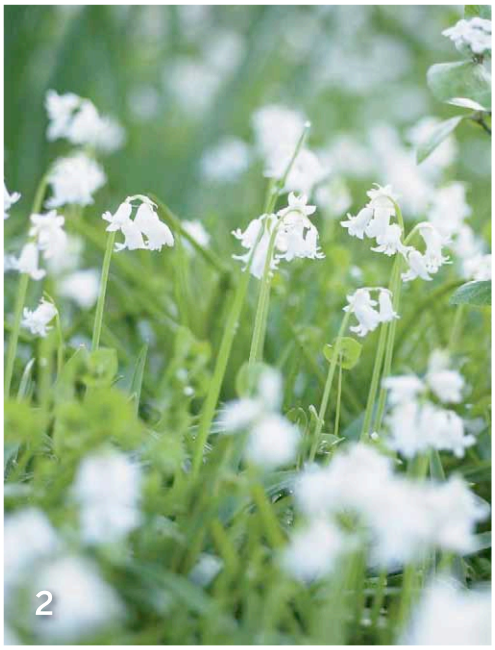
3 ***Euphorbia amygdaloides* var. *robbiae***
Best for tough dry shade The classic plant for dry shade. Although the foliage can seem rather heavy, in spring the bountiful flowers are just perfect for their fresh golden green abundance. In this regard the purple-leaved forms are perhaps too recessive for the darkest places. H 60cm S 1m. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 8b-9a[†].

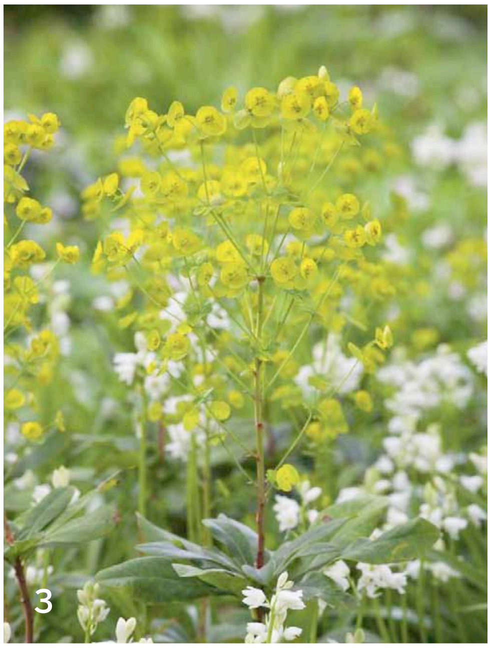
4 ***Milium effusum* 'Aureum'**
In spring and early summer it is difficult to beat the freshness of the young foliage of 'Bowles's Golden Grass'. A great self-seeder, flickering up in spring among the more permanent plants, it fades into the background in the summer. H 10cm S 30cm. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 8b-9a.

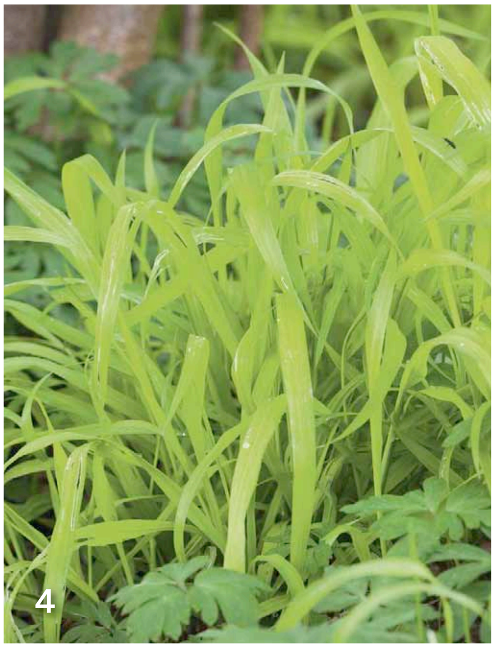
5 ***Primula vulgaris* and hybrids**
Best for massed effects The primrose encapsulates the optimism of spring, flowering for months. However, true oxlips (*Primula elatior*) and hybrids between primroses, cowslips and oxlips hold their flowers in clusters atop a tall single stem, and are more prominent. Use in large numbers. H 25cm S 20cm. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 8b-9a.

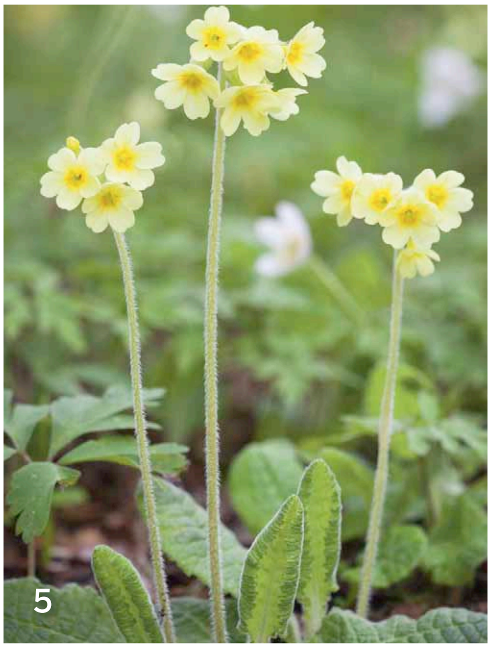
6 ***Tiarella cordifolia***
Best for sheets of flowers Spreading colonies smothered in delicate, pyramidal white flower spikes: in full flower the effect is like tipping a can of soft white paint beneath the trees. There really is no need to use the forms with yellow, blotched and marked foliage. However, the pink-tinted cultivars are beautiful. H 20cm S 30cm. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 8b-9a.

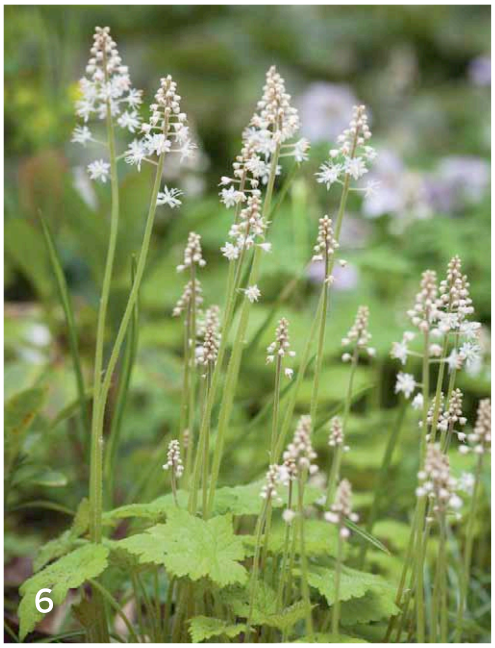


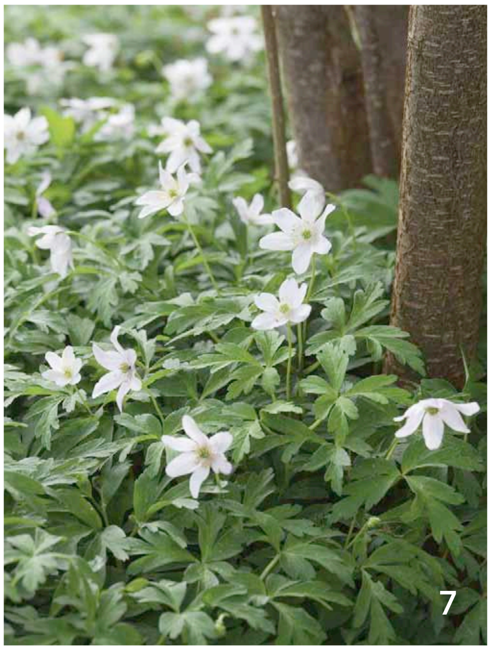








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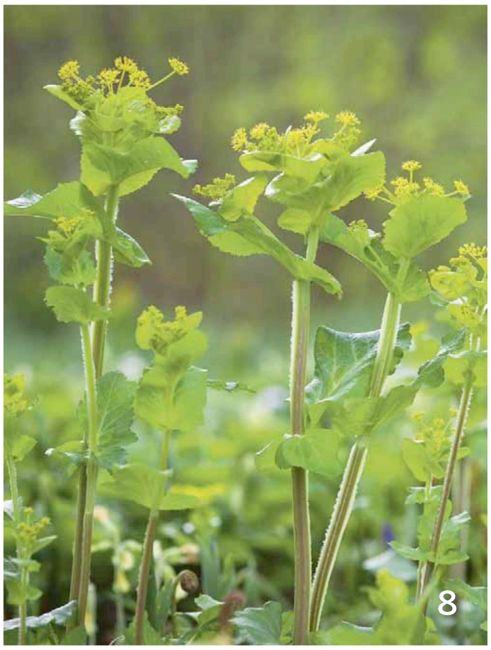
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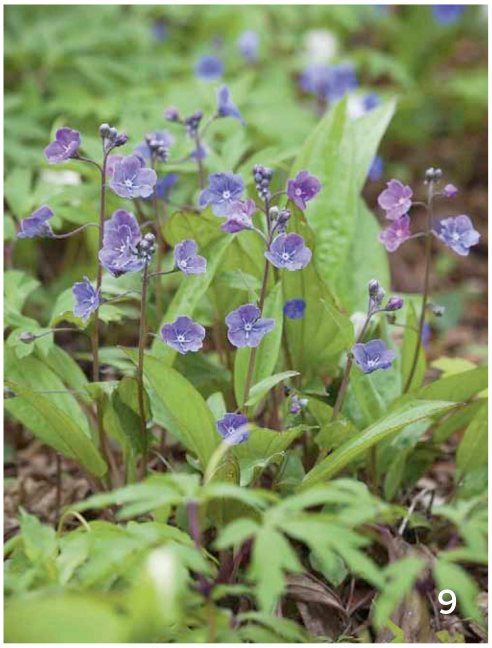
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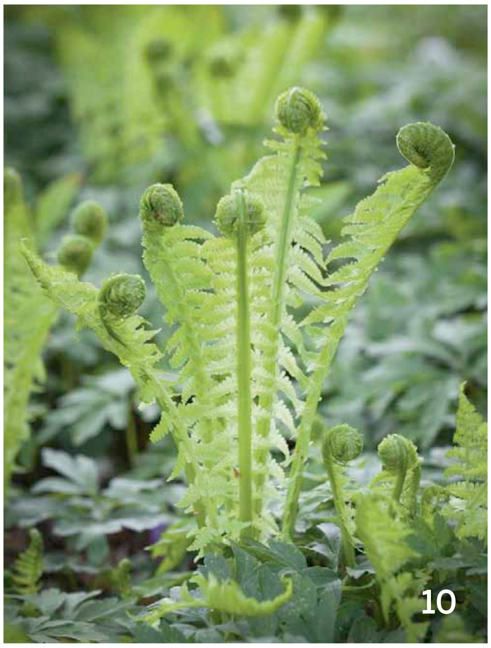
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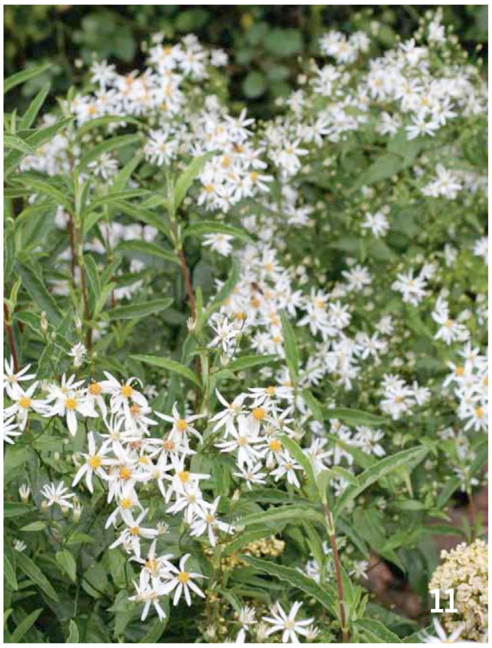
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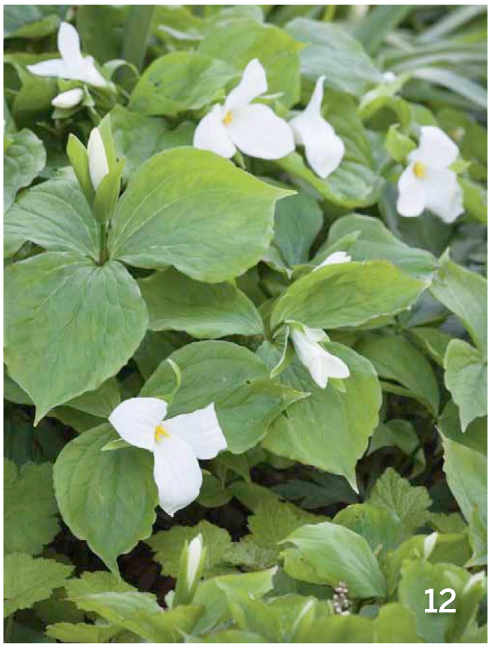
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2 VISIONS / GAP PHOTOS; 11 MARTIN HUGHES-JONES / GARDEN WORLD IMAGES

7 ***Anemone nemorosa***

Best for early spring flowers The wood anemone is my favourite native woodland wildflower, weaving among the coppiced stems. It will stand up to the harshest weather and is perfectly compatible with more robust plants. Beautifully tinted cultivars are also essential. H 15cm S 20cm. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 8b-9a.

8 ***Smyrnium perfoliatum***

This biennial umbellifer is the ultimate self-seeder, when happy, for a shady site. The uplifting golden yellow of its spring foliage and flowers is hard to beat and the plant is fascinating in all its parts, from the rounded leaves that clasp the main stems through to the euphorbia-like flowers. H 60cm S 40cm.

9 ***Omphalodes cappadocica***

A lovely low-growing spring flower. While so many spring blue-flowered plants can be rather wishy-washy, cultivars of this, such as 'Cherry Ingram', are intense in their starry blueness. H 15cm S 25m. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 8b-9a.

10 ***Matteuccia struthiopteris***

Best fern for moist shade An outstanding multi-season fern for general use so long as the site is not dry. The beautiful upright rosette form and the lime-green fresh spring foliage are as uplifting as it gets, but in autumn the plants bleach to the palest yellow before dying back to leave the upright fertile fronds that stand over winter. When happy it forms large spreading colonies. H 1.5m S 50cm. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 8b-9a.

11 ***Aster divaricatus***

Best for autumn flowers Spring is the prime season for woodland and woodland-edge perennials, but this is a notable exception, producing frothy mounds of white flowers in late summer. In spring, the new young foliage is tinged purple-black – perfect for mixing with wood anemones or white bluebells. H 50cm S 50cm.

12 ***Trillium grandiflorum***

The absolute ultimate in cool sophistication, in their native North American woodland habitats trilliums can produce flower sheets to rival those of the British bluebell. Needing rich organic soil, they are a highlight of spring woodland plantings – a nuttery is perfect because light shade produces the best results. H 50cm S 50cm. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 8b-9a.

JONATHAN BUCKLEY, SARAH RAVEN'S CUTTING GARDEN AT PERCH HILL

How to get cut flowers all year

Cut flowers help you connect with nature, fill your home with sights and scents, and allow you to give gifts to friends

WORDS ESTHER MCMILLAN

HOWARD SOOLEY

Esther McMillan is a former head gardener and journalist, now turning her skills to setting up a small cut flower business, Gladys Plum and her Amazing Flower Orchestra.

Growing cut flowers is at once the most self-indulgent of pleasures and yet the most generous. Moderate success means you'll enhance your home and won't be able to give away bunches fast enough in high summer.

It's also an exercise in seasonality. If you're the type to rail against the madness of Peruvian asparagus in November, it's the chance to savour the passing months and, as Vita Sackville-West put it: 'sing the cycle of my country's year'. With the availability of all-year-round roses and tropical foliage, the marvels of air freight and industrial glasshouses have cut many consumers off from the natural world.

In gaining so much, we have surely lost something too. Home-grown cut flowers teach you to bend to seasonal colours, to savour the sparseness of winter twigs or the hopefulness of winter bulbs such as tiny *Iris reticulata*. They act as palate cleansers so when summer really ramps up the volume, it's all the more pleasing to indulge in plentiful bouquets.

Once you've been arranging home-grown blooms, shop-bought flowers seem conformist by comparison. Like slubbed silk in a party dress, the twists and leans of your own crop add charm. The poker-perfect stems of commercially grown perfection will appear anodyne in comparison and you'll appreciate flowers in all their life stages from buds to seedheads. You'll also remember how good real flowers smell.

While the ideal scenario is to grow rows of flowers in your vegetable plot, you could also rethink your annual bedding. Select leggier varieties of snapdragons, rudbeckia or cosmos and they'll fulfil a dual purpose. Plant clumps of favourite cut-flower perennials in your borders so you can snip from the back or Chelsea chop clumps to stagger flowering. Perhaps rethink your edges using useful low plants such as alchemilla or applemint.

The term 'flower arranger's garden' is sadly evocative of spotted laurel and Lawson's cypress, those staples of 1970s pew ends. Arguably it's the foliage you use that sets your home-grown arrangements apart from the shop-bought. Be mindful of what you can press gang from the main garden. Burgundy-leaved *Physocarpus* 'Diabolo', bracingly scented rosemary, the silver limbs of *Brachyglottis* or youthful eucalyptus act as characterful foils. Flowering shrubs too, such as *Philadelphus*, add a note of bohemian abundance.

Whether your motives are environmental, aesthetic or economic, you'll gain great satisfaction from growing your own cut flowers, and if you're generous, maybe even a few plaudits from delighted friends. □

• Turn the page for Esther's choice of plants

SUPPLIERS

Chiltern Seeds
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www.chilternseeds.co.uk

Halls of Heddon
Heddon-on-the-Wall, Northumberland
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Owl's Acre Sweet Peas
Tel 01775 723284,
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Perch Hill Farm, East Sussex TN32 5HP
Tel 0845 092 0283, www.sarahraven.com

Thompson and Morgan
Tel 0844 2485383,
www.thompson-morgan.com/flowers

†Hardiness ratings given where available *Holds an award of garden merit from the royal horticultural society

VISIONS / GAP PHOTOS

1 Planting and growing

When browsing seed catalogues, keep an eye on stem length and avoid the ever downward trend towards dwarf bedding varieties. Think about the colour scheme you want for your home or event and don't just be tempted by the pushy show-offs. You'll need more retiring fillers such as *Bupleurum* and *Ammi* too.

Spread your choices between biennials, which are generally May-flowering, then early-flowering hardy annuals such as sweet peas and cornflowers and slightly later half-hardy annuals such as *Cleome* and *Nicotiana*. This gives a continuous display and eases the pressure on your glasshouse if you're sowing indoors. Space for clumps of early summer perennials such as *Delphinium* and *Astrantia* is wise. They prove regular stalwarts in cold seasons when the flowers of annuals may be delayed.

Cut flowers do best on sunny sites. Prepare as you would a seed bed, whether you plan to sow direct or transplant hardened-off plantlets from your glasshouse. There's no need to regularly fertilise annuals.

Calculate spacings a little closer than normal but make room for access paths. Some form of support will be needed. Get this in place early. Square pea netting stretched horizontally across canes soon disappears as the plants grow through.

2 Cutting and preparing

One key to prolonging vase life is to cut when stems are turgid, preferably in the early morning. Give them a drink. Reducing their temperature also helps, so get your cut flowers and foliage swiftly into the cool for a good soak. Take care to avoid a light source. Stems such as snapdragon and tulips tend to rubberneck towards it.

Some flowers such as *Dahlia* and *Molucella* should be picked at their peak as they don't continue to open in the vase. Others such as sunflower and sweet william, carry on developing once cut.

Don't just go on a raid. Plants such as *Cerinthe* and *Nicotiana* will respond if you cut them at a node (leaf joint). The small bud in that crux will shoot into another stem and flower. This also avoids leaving ugly half stalks.

Floristry lore insists that you trim stems with a sloping cut to allow maximum water intake. Slit woody stems a few inches to promote this too. Sometimes a hollow stem may need support. Rather than a cane, try filling the cavity with water and bunging with cotton wool.

3 Arranging

If your aim is for an uncontrived country style in a vase or basket, poke stems through a mesh of chicken wire. They're held in place, but the overall look is softer than florists' foam gives. Alternatively make a grid across the top of the vase with florists' tape. Either way, this avoids having to fiddle about with soft stems in foam.

Think carefully about the proportion between the arrangement and the vase; low and flat can be fine, but short and dumpy is not. Also remember where the arrangement will sit – can it be flat-backed or does it need to be fulsome from 360 degrees?

Some stems require special treatment; for example milky poppy stems need sealing for a few seconds in hot water.

Beware that some plants can induce dermatitis. Watch out especially for the spurge and carrot family, for example *Euphorbia* and *Angelica*.

1 JONATHAN BUCKLEY; 2 RICHARD BLOOM / GAP PHOTOS; 3 VISIONS / GAP PHOTOS; 4 JAMES A GUILLIAM / GETTY IMAGES; 5 VISIONS / GAP PHOTOS; 6 MARCUS HARPUR / GAP PHOTOS

Spring

1 ***Dianthus barbatus albus***
If you consider sweet william a little old-fashioned, try a single colour strain for modernity. These biennials are sown in summer of the previous season and planted out in autumn to flower in May. Strong plants that are dead-headed will give at least two years' service. H 0.3-4m.

2 ***Angelica archangelica***
Biennial angelica self-seeds madly and sap can cause skin blisters, but it flowers in May when height is unusual in the garden and it's a lovely vibrant shade of green. In a vase, team it with alliums for a cosmic orb festival. Try dipping the ends in boiling water for a few seconds to help rigidity. H 2m S 1m. RHS H4 USDA 8b-9a†.

3 ***Tulipa* 'Superparrot'**
Tulip groups have different characters. The lily-flowered are somewhat prissy and the parrot-flowered flaunt it as roistering partygoers. *T.* 'Superparrot' defies this. The colouring is elegant yet the petals writhe as they open and die. There's nothing like a good death in a tulip. Flowers in May. H 0.25-0.5m.

4 ***Narcissus* 'Sugarbush'**
With their sweet scent and multi- blooms, jonquils make good cut flowers. *N.* 'Sugarbush' is pale lemon turning to white with a yellow-centred cup. Provide it with sun and good drainage to perennialise. Flowers in late April. H 0.25m.

5 ***Allium atropurpureum***
This onion is an affordable choice for planting in volume and a sensible sized flowerhead to mix with other blooms. Seed heads are decorative and can be left in the border or dried indoors for later use. Left undisturbed in a sunny spot, bulbs will perennialise and increase by seed and division. Flowers in May. H 1m.

6 ***Viburnum opulus* 'Roseum'**
This May flowering shrub is the epitome of a spring wedding with its hanging baubles of white-green blooms. Unfussy as to conditions and potentially vigorous, long stems can be harvested once established. The only disadvantage is its sterility, so don't expect autumn berries too! H 2-4m S Up to 2m. AGM* RHS H4 USDA 8b-9a†.

Summer

1 ***Centaurea cyanus* 'Blue Boy'**
While blue centaurea are still best in my book, white, pink, deep burgundy ('Black Boy') and red colours are available, although the latter ages badly. Cornflowers are reliable hardy annuals and can be sown in autumn to March. Any later and plants will be weedy. Better still, marshal self-sown seedlings into rows in autumn for early June flowering. H 1m.

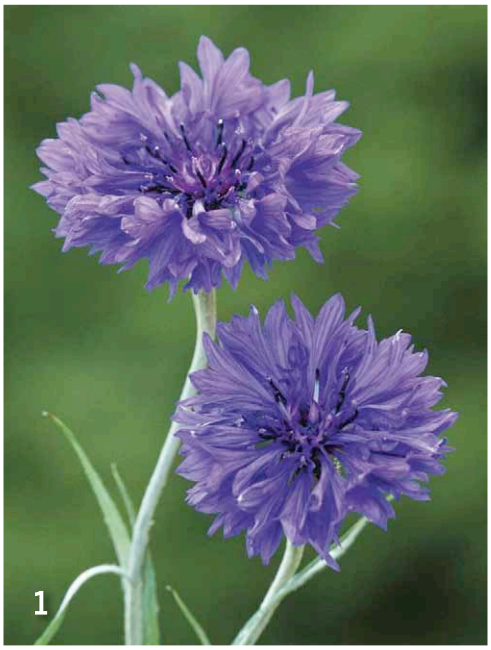
2 ***Nicotiana affinis***
Often martyrs to mildew, the pure white species *N. affinis* seems more immune and produces successive long stems. Another half-hardy annual species, *N. mutabilis* has an airier character with dainty pink and white flowers on gangly branches. More useful is its slighter denser but still attractively rangy relative *N.* 'Whisper Mixed'. H 0.5m.

3 ***Panicum* 'Frosted Explosion'**
With a hint of fibre optics, this short annual grass adds textured filling to arrangements and keeps producing fireworks of inflorescences for months. Very different is the grainy, hanging mane of *P. violaceum*. Collect seed from both. H 0.4m.

4 ***Ammi majus***
Ammi may only be upmarket cow parsley and irritatingly fashionable at that, but it lends romantic laciness to a vase. Sow your first crop indoors in January. If you want a sideways step, try *Orlaya grandiflora* with its mini lacecap flowers, or *Ammi visnaga* for rounder umbels. H 1m.

5 ***Lathyrus odoratus* 'Mollie Rilstone'**
Mollie is the latest darling of my fickle affections. Her cream petals are peach-edged turning to pink with a scent reminiscent of tuberose. If you want to battle mice, by all means sow in autumn, but a January sowing under cold glass is fine. Repeat sow until April. H 1.5-2m.

6 ***Echinacea purpurea***
With ever more unusual varieties of echinacea available from seed, this is an economical perennial to grow from scratch. Its greyish pink petals mix well with grasses and the wine tones of autumn. Flowers last long in a vase. H 1m S 30cm.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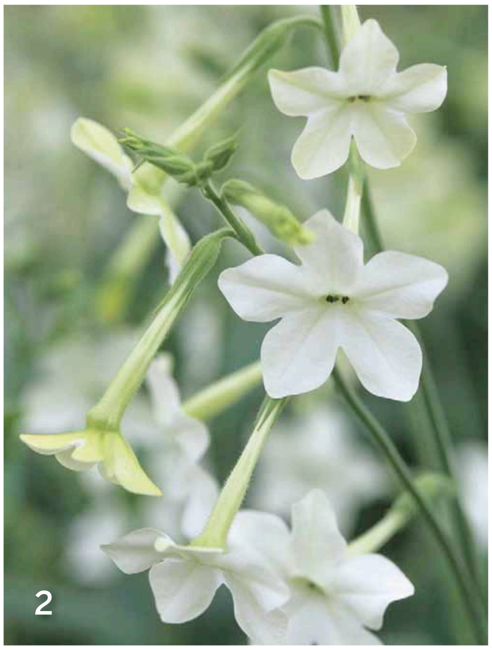
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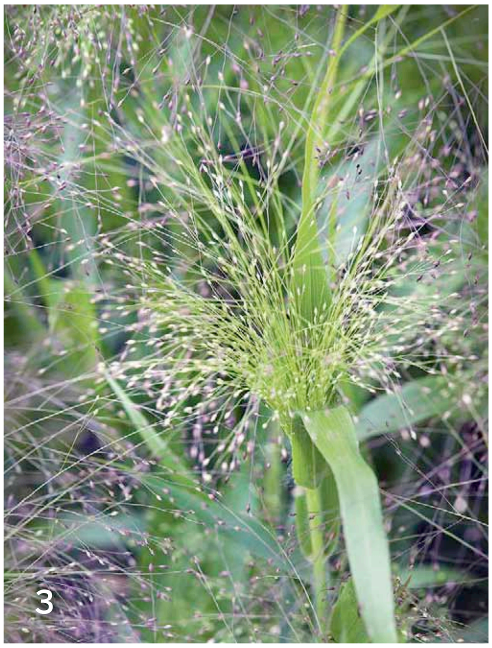
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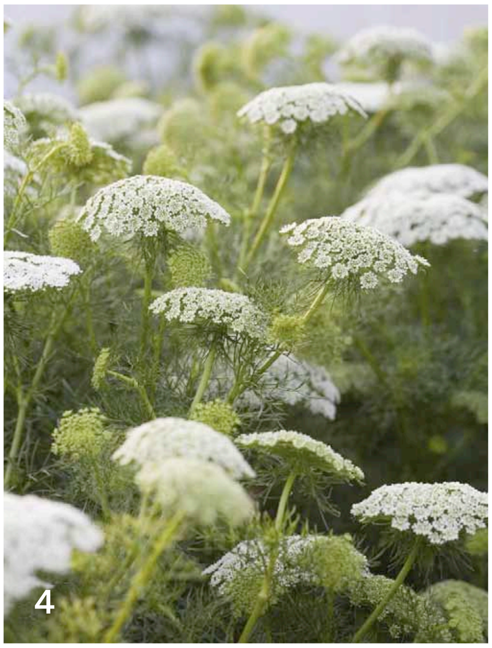
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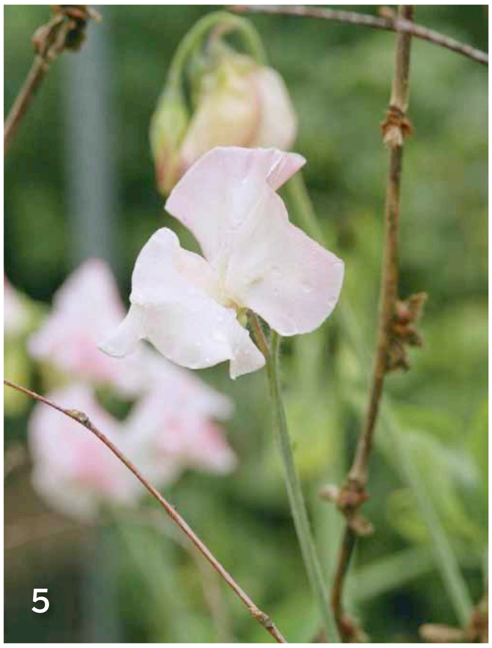
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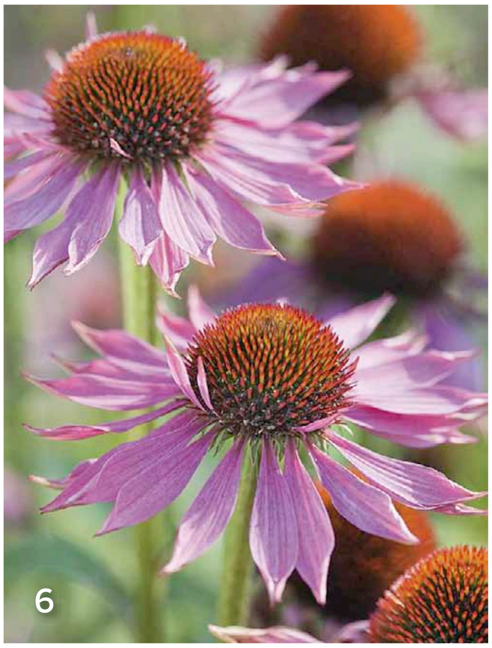
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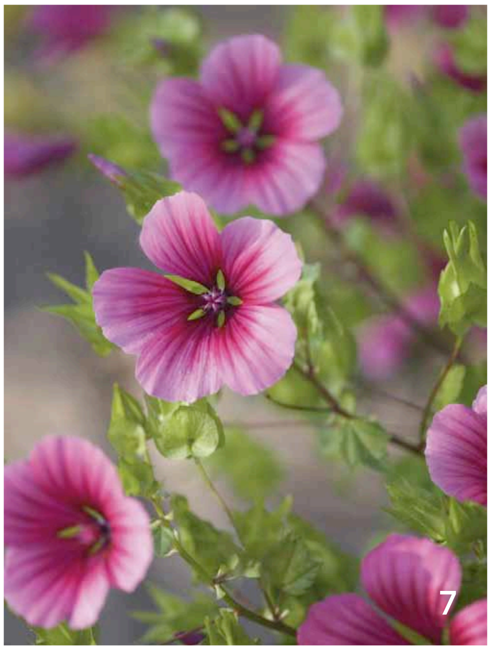
1 JONATHAN BUCKLEY; 2 ANDREW LAWSON / THE GARDEN COLLECTION; 3 & 6 ANDREA JONES; 4 MADDIE THORNHILL / GAP PHOTOS; 5 PAUL DEBOIS / GAP PHOTOS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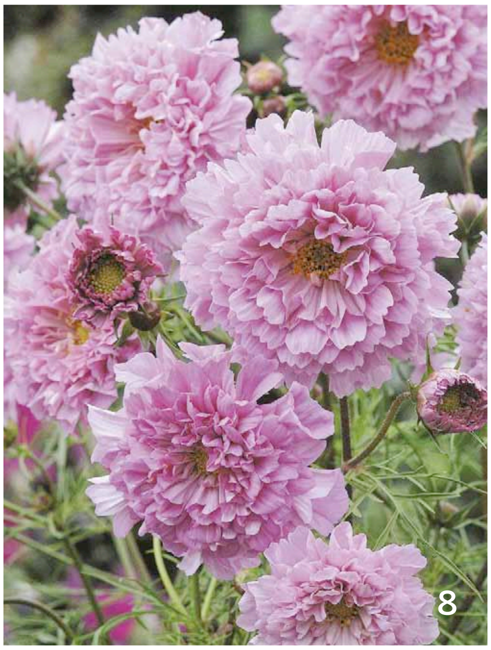
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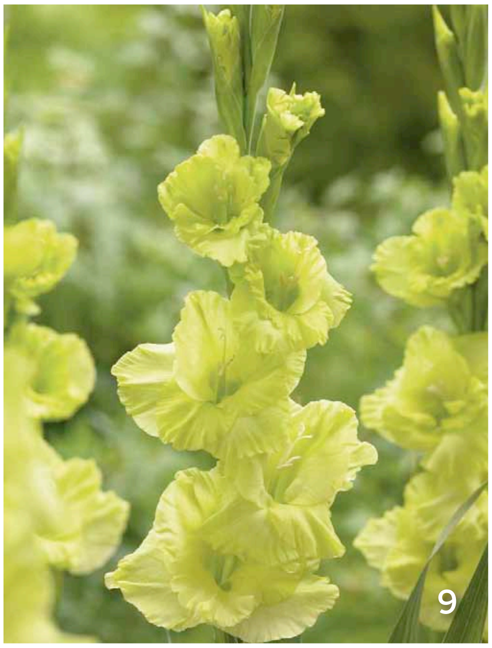
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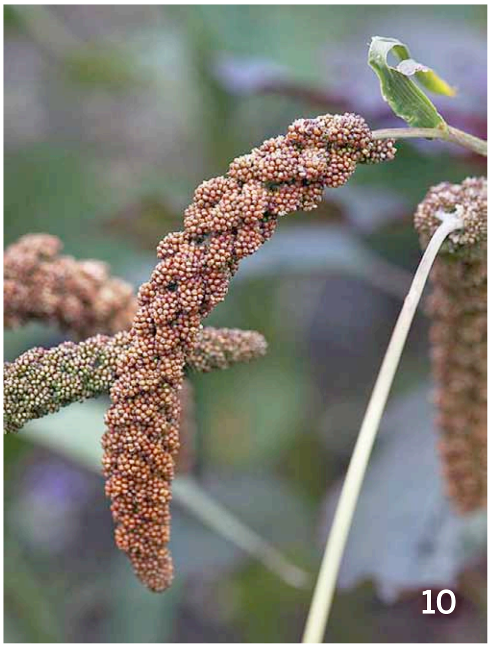
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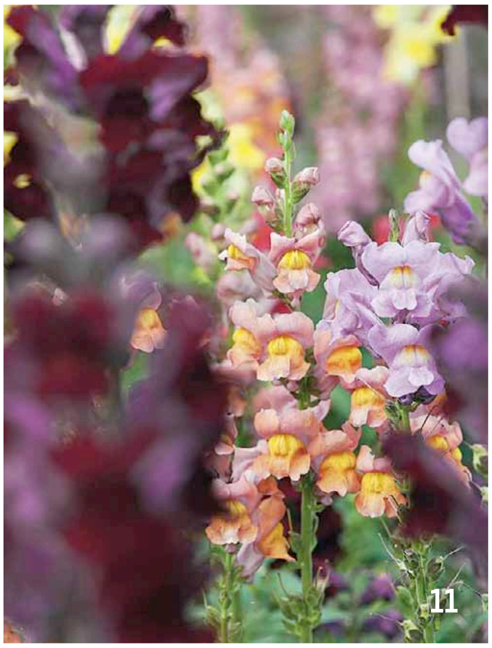
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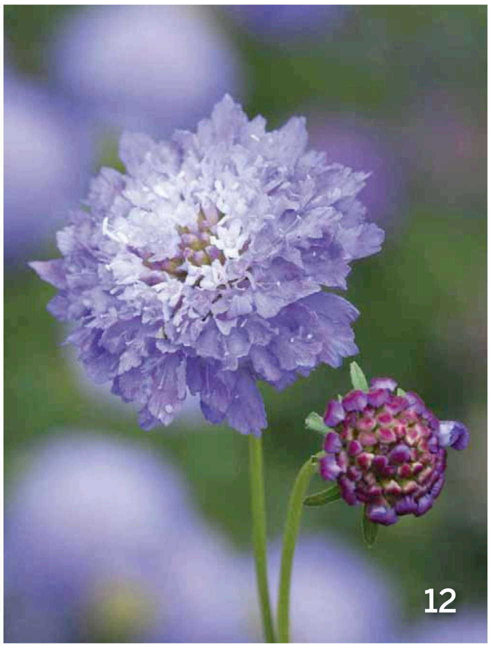
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7 PERNILLA BERGDAHL / GAP PHOTOS; 8 THOMPSON & MORGAN; 9 VISIONS / GAP PHOTOS; 10 & 11 ANDREA JONES; 12 JONATHAN BUCKLEY / GAP PHOTOS

7 *Malope trifida*
With its satiny mallow-like flowers this bushy hardy annual is quite eye-catchingly different. The mix of deep and light pinks contrasts well with its sappy green sepals. H 0.75m.

8 *Cosmos bipinnatus* Double Click Series 'Rose Bonbon'
Avoid the munchkin bedding cultivars of this half-hardy annual. Instead choose tall 'Sensation Mix' to pick long arms of ferny foliage topped by childishly simple flowers. If you want something a little more frou-frou, try the double-flowered 'Rose Bonbon' in dusky pink or its white cousin 'Snow Puff'. H 1-1.5m.

9 *Gladiolus* 'Greenstar'
Surely it's the turn of glads to follow dahlias in the retro revival. But if you have taste issues, try this green variety. Lift corms after flowering, cut off foliage and store in a warm and dry place for planting in April the following year. H 1-1.5m.

10 *Setaria italica* 'Highlander'
These annual grasses bring a curious texture and flair to arrangements. Choose the brown coils of *S. italica* 'Highlander', the red-leaved *S.* 'Italian Jewel' or the wonderfully hairy *S. macrostachya* that brings sap green caterpillars to mind. H 0.75m.

11 *Antirrhinum majus* 'Rocket Mix'
Rather than fiddling about rubbing out side shoots to create tall single spires, this mix gives several stems of reasonable length on each plant if pinched out early. A little high potash feed helps too and may encourage a second crop from an early sowing. Treat as an annual. H 0.5m.

12 *Scabiosa atropurpurea* 'Oxford Blue'
The traditional florist's scabious, *S. caucasica* holds thin-petalled flowers in shades of blue or white on wiry stems. Its more prolific cousin, *S. atropurpurea*, is best treated as an annual. It extends the colour range through to deep burgundy, such as *S.* 'Ace of Spades'. The lavender 'Oxford Blue' teamed with *Cerinthe* is dreamy. H 0.5m.

Autumn

1 ***Dahlia*** **'Doris Day'**
For colour range and 3D wonder, dahlias are the thing. Waterlily, cactus and decorative types are the most amenable to arranging. For good-sized flowers on strong stems, leave one central flower bud per stem. The tubers are best considered tender. H 1m.

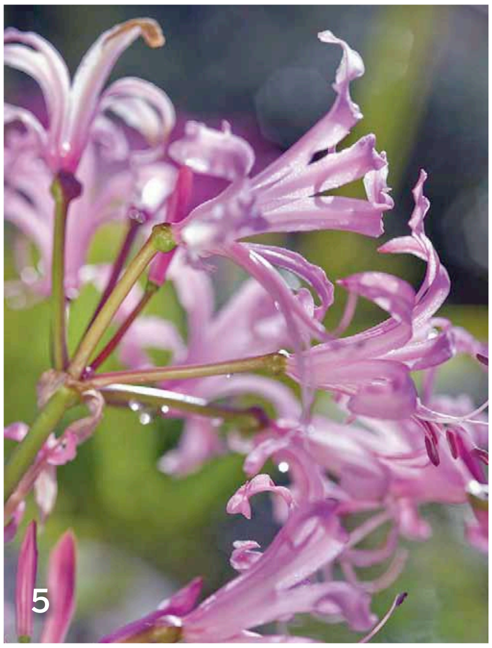
2 ***Iris foetidissima***
Despite an unprepossessing common name and dowdy flowers, stinking iris comes into its own in autumn when its seed pods open their throats to reveal orange or yellow seeds, or in the case of 'Fructu Albo', white ones. Not fussy about light levels. Yellow and variegated forms are available. H 0.5m. AGM. RHS H4 USDA 8b-9a.

3 ***Physalis alkekengi*** **var.** ***franchetii***
The small white flowers of this ornamental relative of the cape gooseberry are easily dismissed until autumn. Then they develop into hanging balloons or oriental ogees that turn from green to orange. If laced individually through silver wire, they make delightful Halloween bunting. It proves a cheerfully invasive perennial in the right spot. H 1m.

4 ***Amaranthus*** **'Hopi Red Dye'**
Although amaranth flowers through the summer, it's in autumn that the coils or plumes of this annual mix best with the opulence of berries and hips. The pinky-red love-lies-bleeding comes in a pale green too, but the deep beetroot stems and tail-like flowers of 'Hopi Red Dye' are the most seasonal to team with wine-shaded dahlias. H 0.75m

5 ***Nerine bowdenii***
This is the toughest showgirl of the *Nerine* genus, though she still requires shelter, good drainage and to be safe, a winter mulch for the bulbs. If the pink is too girly, then you can't beat 'Alba' for sophistication. Stems last over a week in water. H 0.5m. AGM. RHS H4 USDA 8b-9a.

6 ***Rosa glauca***
Species roses generally produce the best hips. This rose is great within a border, with small hips set against a backdrop of grey, pink-tinged foliage. H 2m S 1m. AGM. RHS H4 USDA 8b-9a.



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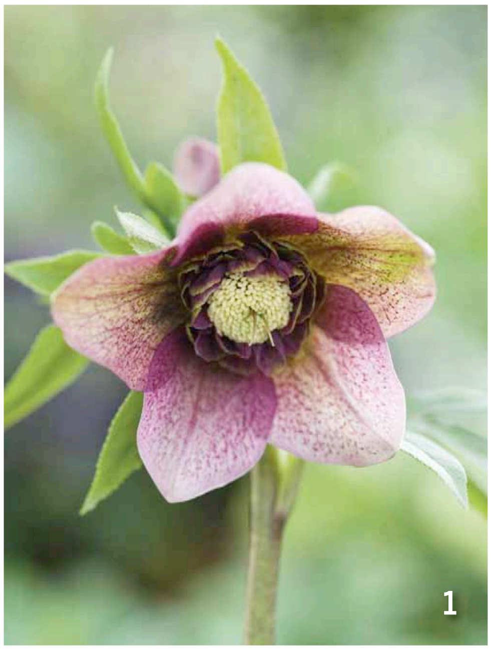
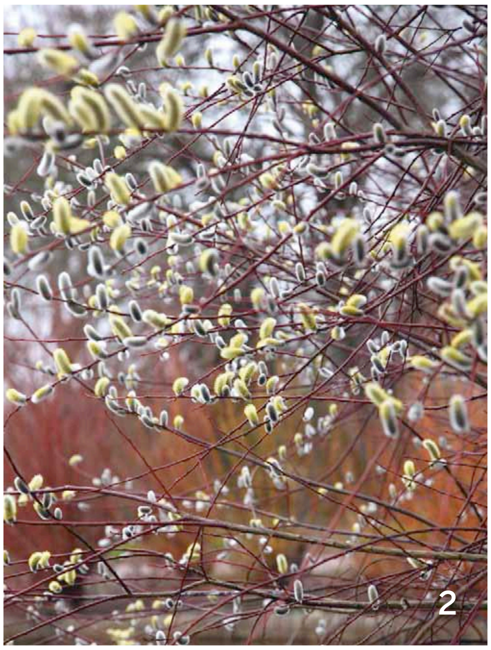
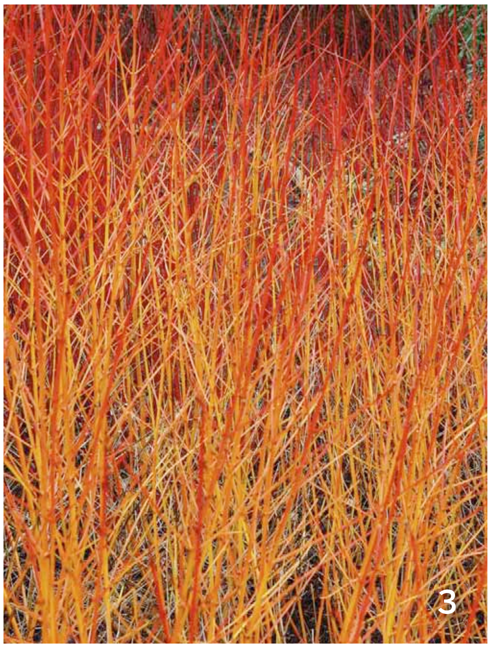
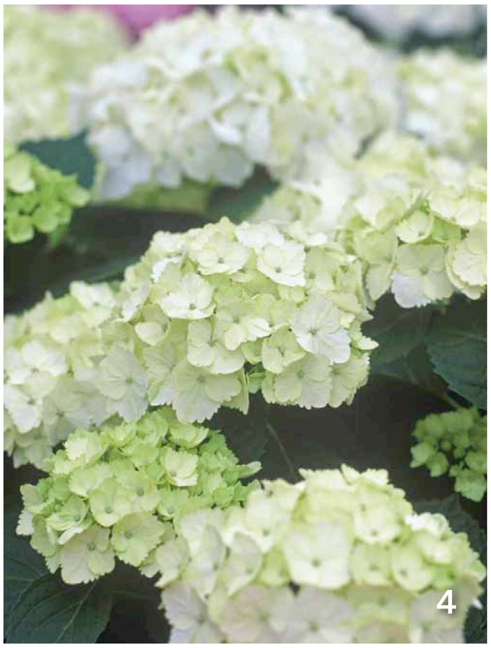
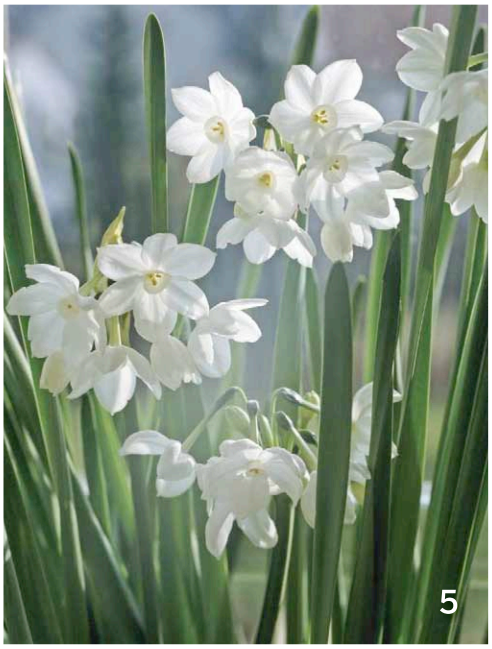
Winter

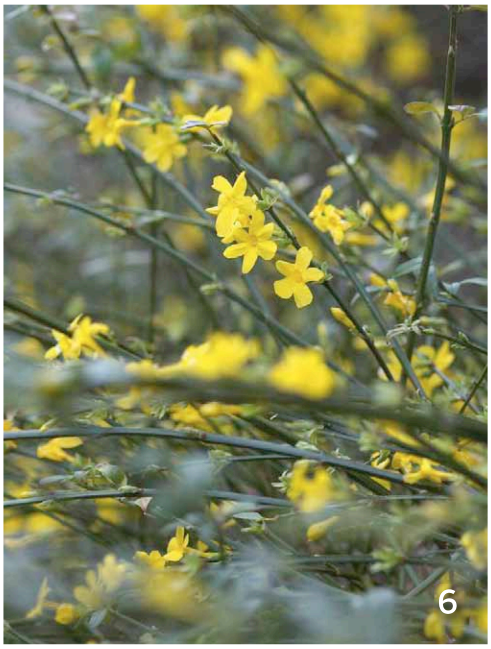












1 ***Helleborus* x *hybridus* cultivars**
Snip off a few flowers and float face up in a wide bowl. More freckles, doubles, picotees and anemone-centred cultivars continue to be bred. Enjoys semi-shade and a rich soil. H 0.3m S 40cm.

2 ***Salix daphnoides* 'Aglaia'**
A willow with lightly bloomed purple stems, it also bears silver catkins in February. Willows can fill problematic damp spots or provide interest in naturalistic areas. The yearly harvesting of stems to create pollards on short stumps promotes colourful growth. H 3-6m S 4-8m. RHS, H4 USDA 8b-9a.

3 ***Cornus sanguinea* 'Midwinter Fire'**
Well-pruned stems of dogwoods become the stars of the winter garden rather than the shorn victims of supermarket car parks. In late winter, harvest stems down to the base to encourage bright new growth. On less robust cultivars, take only one half annually. Also use as colourful supports for pots of forced bulbs. H 1.5m S 1.5m. RHS, H4 USDA 8b-9a.

4 ***Hydrangea macrophylla* 'Madame Emile Mouillère'**
Left to go leathery before cutting, this white mop head turns a red-tinged green, excellent for a touch of French glamour at Christmas. But if it's looking drab, get out that gold spray. Thin out shrubs in mid-spring and deadhead to a strong pair of buds. H to 1.8m S 1.5m. AGM. RHS H3-H4 USDA 9a-9b.

5 ***Narcissus papyraceus***
If you've forgotten to plant bulbs, tender paperwhites will come to the rescue. With no need for chilling, they'll flower in 6-8 weeks. Plant shallow and start off in cool spot to aid root growth. Fence your pot around with coloured stems to provide support. Highly scented. H 0.3m.

6 ***Jasminum nudiflorum***
A scrambling shrub to brighten a dingy wall. Only the most jaded observer can fail to cherish the beauty of its flowering cascades. Teams well in a vase with cotoneaster berries or *Iris foetidissima* and lasts for weeks. Thin congested plants after flowering. H 2.5m S Up to 2.5m. AGM. RHS H4 USDA 8b-9a.

1 HOWARD RICE / GAP PHOTOS; 2 MARTIN HUGHES-JONES / GAP PHOTOS; PLANTOGRAPHY / ALAMY; 4 RICHARD BLOOM / GAP PHOTOS; 5 FRIEDRICH STRAUSS / GAP PHOTOS; 6 TORIE CHUGG / THE GARDEN COLLECTION

Capel Manor Gardens

Bullsmoor Lane | Enfield | Middlesex | EN1 4RQ

SHOWS AND EVENTS FOR 2013

GARDENS RE-OPEN AT WEEKENDS – Saturday 2nd March

NGS Weekend
Saturday 9th – Sunday 10th March, 10am–5pm

Spring Bonsai Event
Sunday 17th March, 10am–4pm

Lambing Weekend at Forty Hall Farm
Saturday 23rd – Sunday 24th March, 11am–4pm

Easter Egg Hunt
(in partnership with Noah's Ark Children's Hospice)
Saturday 30th March, 11am–3pm

Quakers Artists Exhibition
Monday 1st – Monday 8th April, 10am–5pm

Spring Gardening Show
Friday 12th – Sunday 14th April, 10am–5pm

Celebration of Trees and the Countryside
Friday 19th – Saturday 20th April, 10am–5pm

Falconry Day
Saturday 4th May, 11am–4pm

Southgate Art Exhibition
Sunday 19th May – Sunday 2nd June, 10am–5pm

Lea Valley Cactus and Succulent Show
Saturday 25th – Bank Holiday Monday 27th May, 10am–5pm

Mad Hatters Tea Party
(with Nightingale Cancer Support Centre)
Bank Holiday Monday 27th May, 1pm–5pm

Herts Heavy Horse Show
Sunday 2nd June, 10am–5pm

The Comedy of Errors
Open Air Theatre
with The Principal Theatre Co.
Thursday 13th, Friday 14th and Saturday 15th June, 7.30pm–10pm, Sunday 16th June, 2.30pm–5pm, Saturday 22nd June, 7.30pm–10pm

College Open Day and Free for Enfield Day
Saturday 15th June, 10am–5pm

National Pelargonium and Geranium Show
Sunday 16th June, 10am–5pm

Hamlet
Open Air Theatre
with The Principal Theatre Co.
Wednesday 19th, Thursday 20th, Friday 21st June, 7.30pm–10pm, Saturday 22nd June, 2.30pm–5pm

Grand Bonsai Event
Sunday 30th June, 10am–4pm

Enfield Choir Festival
Friday 5th July, 7pm–10pm

National Sweet Pea Competition
(in association with the Sun Newspaper)
Saturday 6th July, 10am–4pm

Enfield Art Circle Exhibition
Saturday 13th July – Friday 9th August, 10am–5pm

Sunday Best Scooterfest 3
Sunday 21st July, 10am–5pm

Fuchsia Festival
Saturday 27th, 1pm–4pm,
Sunday 28th July, 10am–4pm

Opening Dates and Times:
10am–5.30pm, last admission 4pm
March – October, open daily
November – February, open weekdays only

Admission:
Adults: **£5.50** Concessions: **£4.50**
Children: **£2.50** *(5's and under go free)*
Family Ticket: **£13.50**
(2 adults and up to 3 children)

Capel Manor Gardens
Bullsmoor Lane, Enfield EN1 4RQ
Just off Junction 25 of the M25
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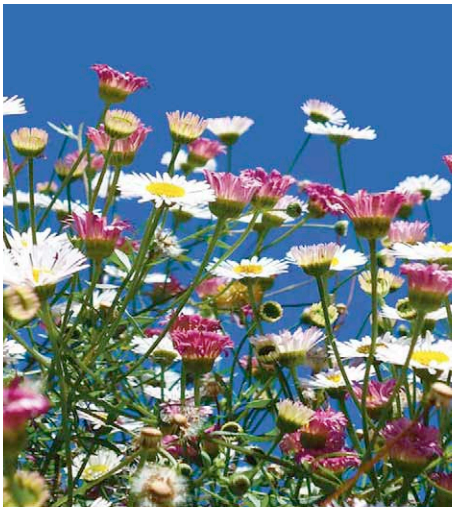
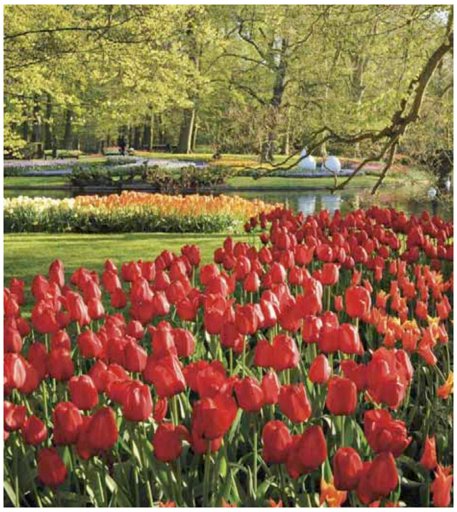
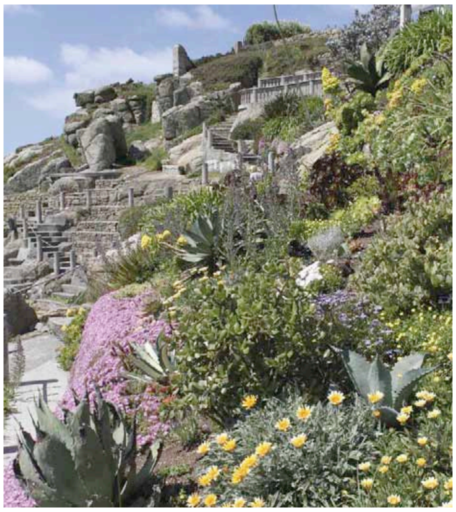
cservices@capel.ac.uk
www.capelmanorgardens.co.uk

For further details please visit www.capelmanorgardens.co.uk or call 08456 122122 for a full colour brochure

Correct at the time of printing. Please check website for up to date details.

Events Guide

Plan a trip to one of the best UK and International garden shows and outdoor theatre events this year...

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Firle Place, Lewes
East Sussex, 19-21 April
Stansted Park, Rowlands Castle
Hampshire, 7-9 June
Loseley Park, Guildford
Surrey, 19-21 July

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info@thegardenshowonline.com
www.thegardenshowonline.com

Credit: J. Myles-Lea

GARDEN TOURS AND TALKS

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Perennial's Special Events are uniquely developed for the garden-loving enthusiast. Events include garden tours and talks by owners and head gardeners, lunch and often afternoon tea. Treat yourself to a wonderful day out and support Perennial's vital work providing a lifeline for people from the world of horticulture facing serious difficulties such as financial hardship, old age, illness or isolation.

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CORNWALL, TR19 6JU

There is drama on stage and in the gardens of Cornwall's 'Theatre Under The Stars', built into the cliffside of the spectacular Porthcurno bay. The sub-tropical rockeries have become a must for gardeners with a taste for the exotic. The ideas and plant selection are based on the cliff garden developed here by Rowena Cade in the 1930s. The salt-tolerant succulents thrive despite the wind, providing an added dash of colour throughout the year.

☎ 01736 810181
info@minack.com
www.minack.com

CORNWALL SPRING FLOWER SHOW

CORNWALL, PL22 0RG

This year's Cornwall Spring Flower Show is being held in the stunning setting of Boconnoc Estate, near Lostwithiel, on Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 April. With a wide range of competitive classes, show gardens, trade stands and children's activities, the event is being officially opened by broadcaster and horticulturist Roy Lancaster. Advance tickets cost £6.50 per adult or £6 for groups of 20+. Admission is free for under 16s.

☎ 01209 714488
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CAPEL MANOR GARDENS

MIDDLESEX, EN1 4RQ

Over the weekend of Friday 12 – Sunday 14 April 2013, Capel Manor Gardens will once again be holding its ever popular Spring Gardening Show, now in its 21st year. With a strong focus on horticulture and other garden related topics there will be a wide variety of stands for everyone to see. These range from plant nurseries, garden furniture and fine leathers, to ironworks, sculptures and cotton clothing. There will be plenty of extra entertainment on the Saturday and Sunday including falconry, willow weaving, fruit carving and performances from the London Vegetable Orchestra.

☎ 08456 122 122
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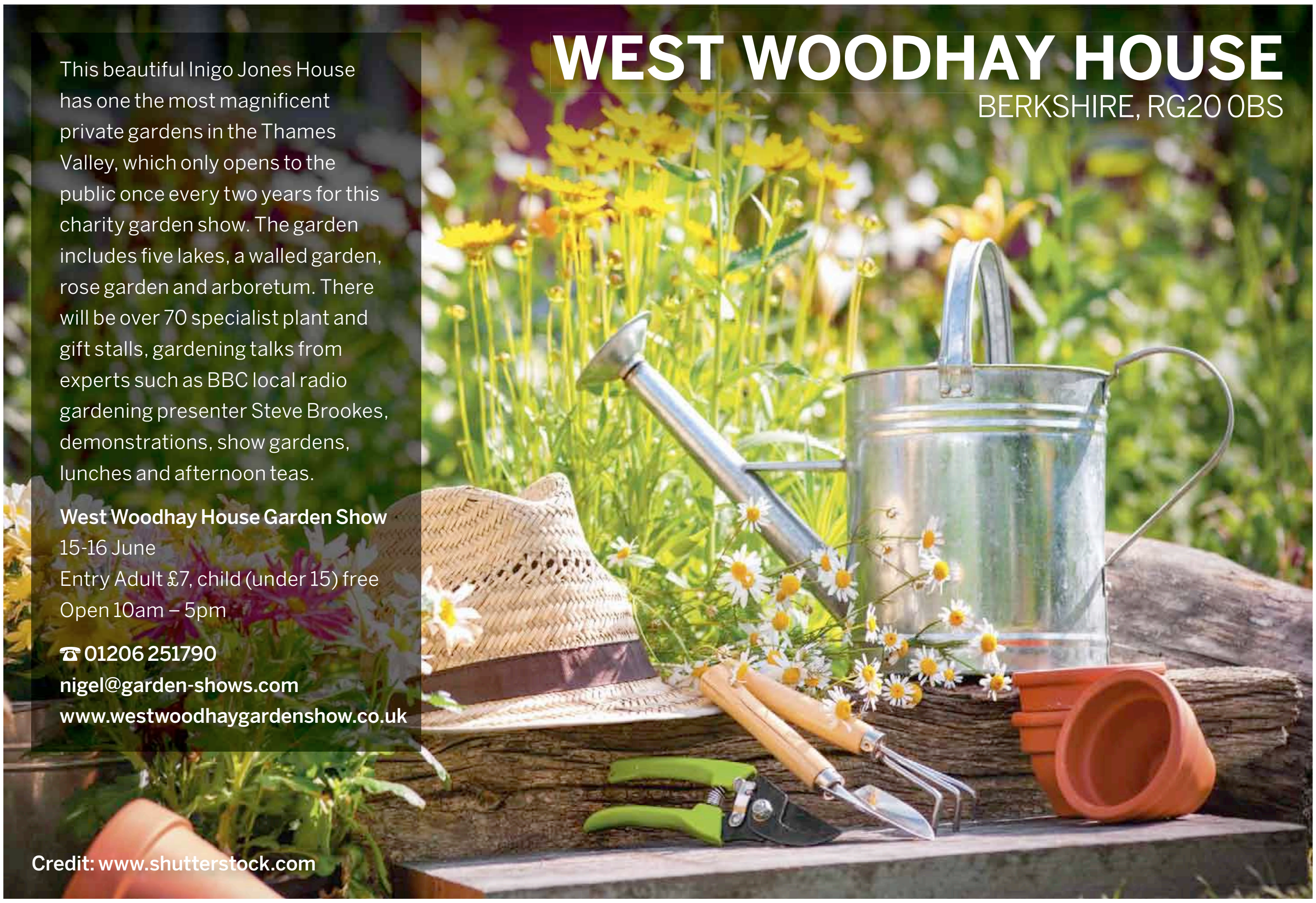
www.capelmanorgardens.co.uk



WEST WOODHAY HOUSE

BERKSHIRE, RG20 0BS

This beautiful Inigo Jones House has one the most magnificent private gardens in the Thames Valley, which only opens to the public once every two years for this charity garden show. The garden includes five lakes, a walled garden, rose garden and arboretum. There will be over 70 specialist plant and gift stalls, gardening talks from experts such as BBC local radio gardening presenter Steve Brookes, demonstrations, show gardens, lunches and afternoon teas.

West Woodhay House Garden Show
15-16 June
Entry Adult £7, child (under 15) free
Open 10am – 5pm

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nigel@garden-shows.com
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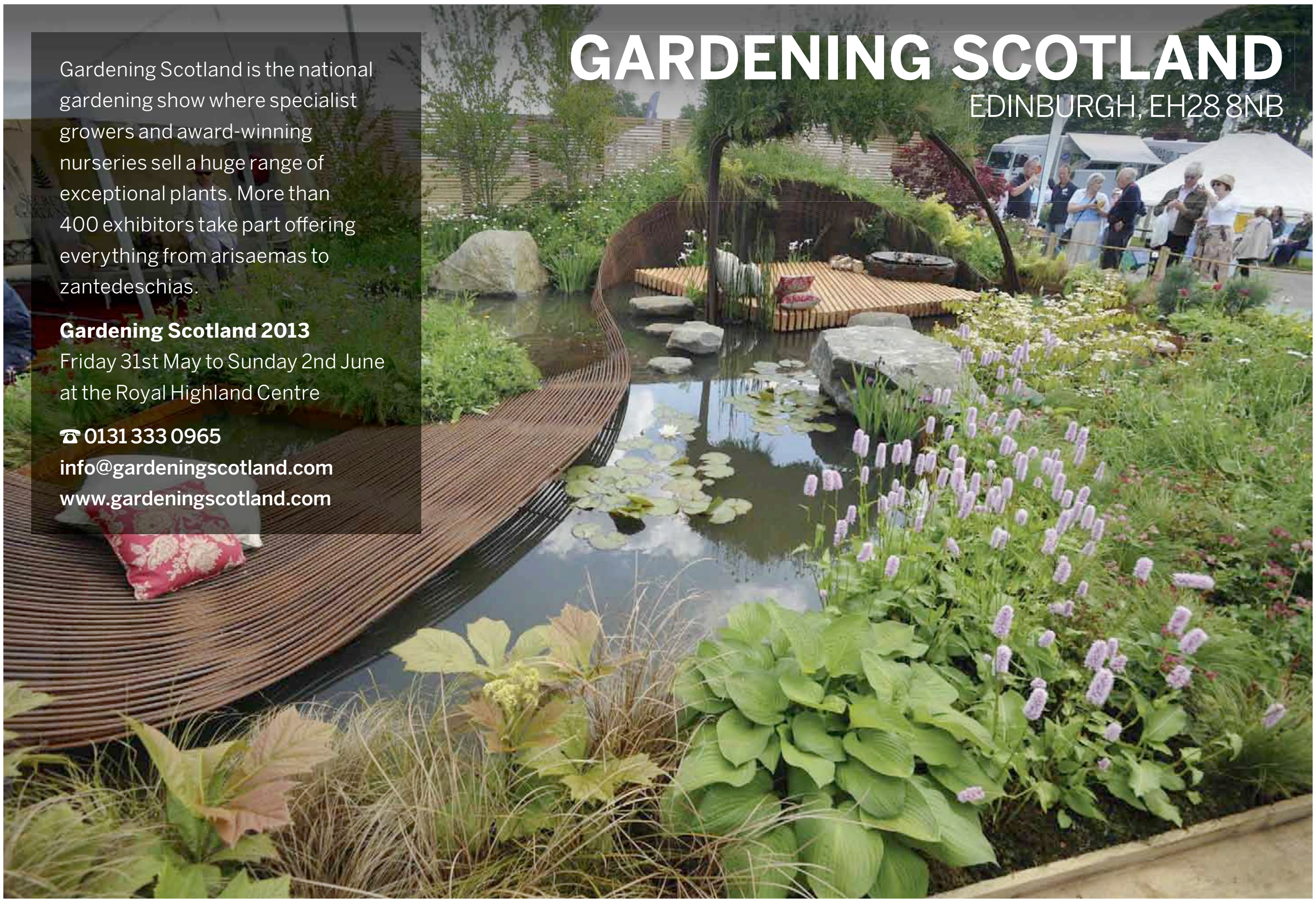

GARDENING SCOTLAND

EDINBURGH, EH28 8NB

Gardening Scotland is the national gardening show where specialist growers and award-winning nurseries sell a huge range of exceptional plants. More than 400 exhibitors take part offering everything from arisaemas to zantedeschias.

Gardening Scotland 2013
Friday 31st May to Sunday 2nd June
at the Royal Highland Centre

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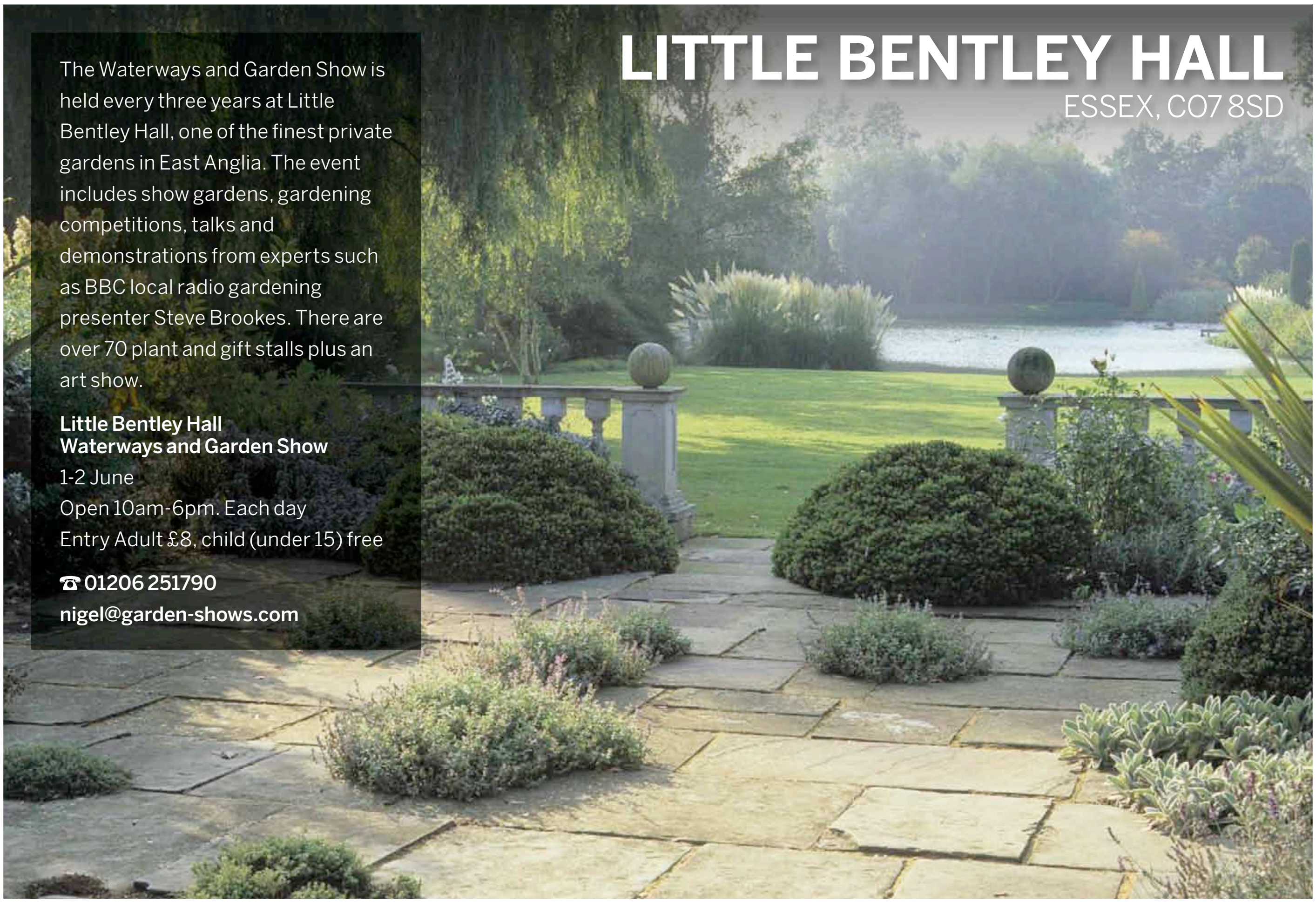

LITTLE BENTLEY HALL

ESSEX, CO7 8SD

The Waterways and Garden Show is held every three years at Little Bentley Hall, one of the finest private gardens in East Anglia. The event includes show gardens, gardening competitions, talks and demonstrations from experts such as BBC local radio gardening presenter Steve Brookes. There are over 70 plant and gift stalls plus an art show.

Little Bentley Hall
Waterways and Garden Show
1-2 June
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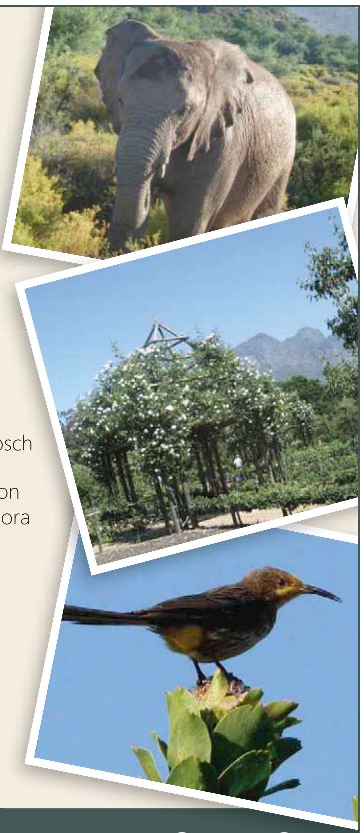

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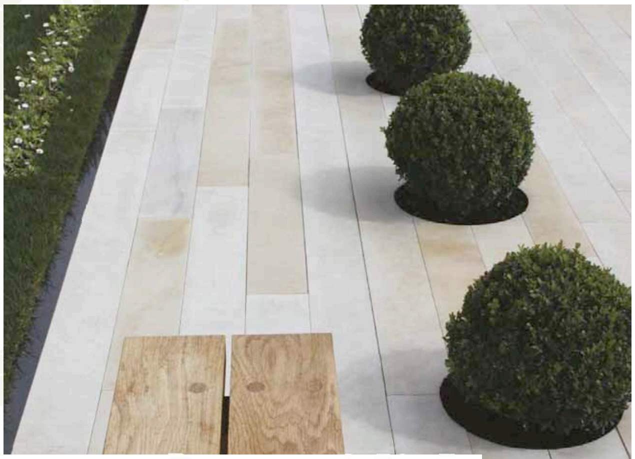

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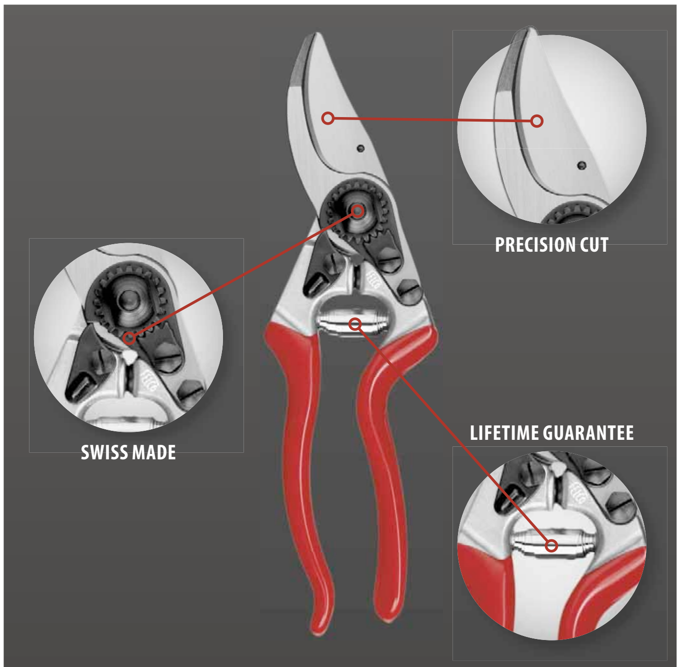

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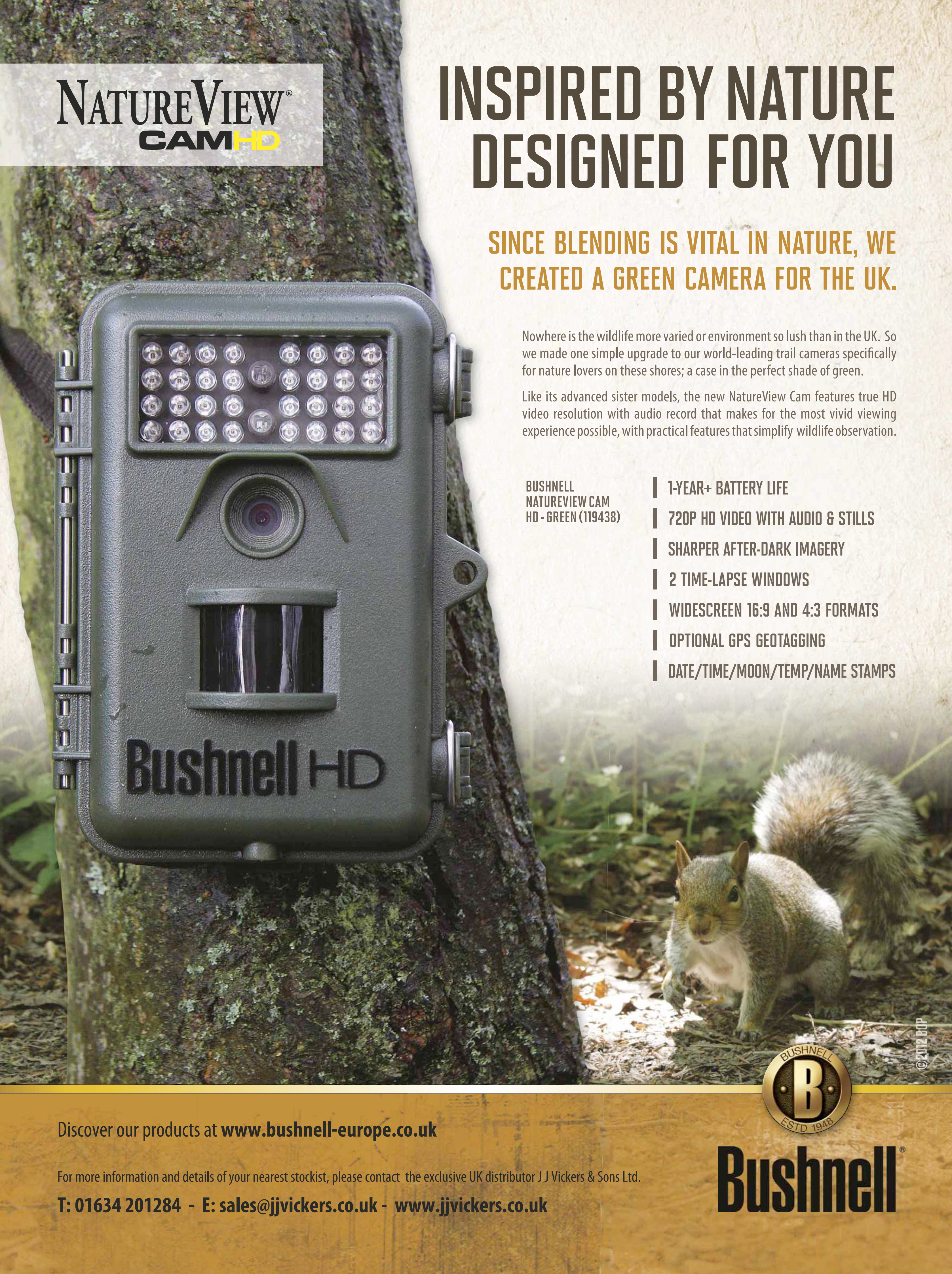

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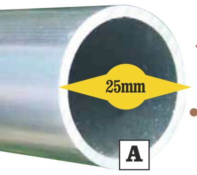

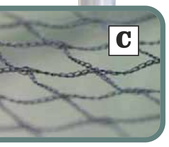

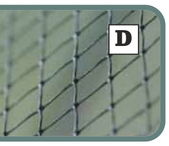

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- SIDE NETTING (D) - 16mm x 16mm square mesh, extra heavy duty black netting attaches neatly to the frame with releasable cable ties to give a smart finish and secures to the ground with steel ground pegs.
- DOOR KIT (E - main image) - 1.95m high x 91cm wide and can be installed on any side of the cage. Features locking hinges that keep the door rigid and prevent it from ever dropping. Opens inwards or outwards and secures strongly with a stainless steel door catch.
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4	13'	£213	£216	£218	£231	£234	£239	£290				
4.5	14'9"	£215	£218	£220	£234	£238	£242	£293	£298			
5	16'6"	£217	£220	£222	£237	£240	£244	£297	£300	£308		
5.5	18'	£245	£248	£251	£265	£267	£275	£336	£342	£348	£393	
6	19'6"	£248	£251	£256	£268	£272	£278	£342	£349	£354	£400	£408
7	23'	£250	£254	£263	£271	£276	£279	£346	£351	£358	£402	£412
8	26'4"	£293	£298	£302	£320	£324	£332	£411	£414	£423	£484	£489
9	29'6"	£322	£327	£331	£349	£355	£361	£452	£460	£468	£527	£540
12	39'6"	£410	£412	£424	£433	£436	£458	£567	£573	£583	£663	£670
14	46'	£420	£424	£434	£444	£446	£472	£580	£583	£593	£679	£687
	ft	6'6"	7'3"	8'	9'	9'9"	11'6"	13'	14'9"	16'6"	18'	19'6"
m		2	2.25	2.5	2.75	3	3.5	4	4.5	5	5.5	6

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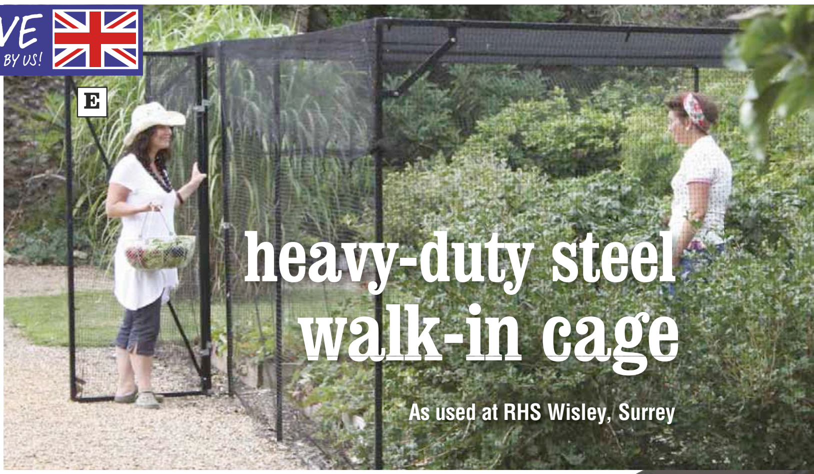
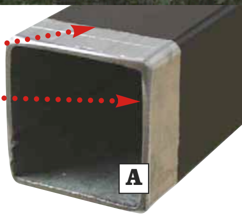


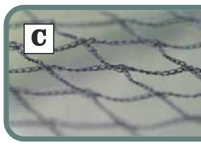
heavy-duty steel walk-in cage

As used at RHS Wisley, Surrey



- *Polyester black powder coating for extra protection*
- *Galvanised steel for rust resistance*

Widely regarded as the professional's choice, the Superior Steel Cage (GDN-100) is complete with:



- STEEL FRAMEWORK (A) - heavy duty 25mm/1" square x 1.5mm thick. 2m above ground height with uprights inserting 30cm/12" into the ground. 10 Year Framework Guarantee.
- STEEL REINFORCED CONNECTORS (B) – provides ultimate stability, they fit inside the bar for a flush and neat finish – far better than unsightly and exposed plastic connectors that sit on top of the frame.
- ROOF NETTING (C) - 20mm x 20mm diamond heavy-duty anti-bird mesh. It's cut to the size of your cage with ample overhang to attach to the side netting using net clips.
- SIDE NETTING (D) - 16mm x 16mm square mesh, extra heavy duty black netting attaches neatly to the frame with releasable cable ties and secures to the ground with steel ground pegs.
- DOOR KIT (E - main image) - 1.95m high x 78cm wide and can be installed on any side of the cage. Features an extra strength diagonal steel support brace, hinges and foot plates to keep the door rigid at all times and prevent it from ever dropping. It opens inwards or outwards and secures strongly with a sliding catch.
- Ties, pegs, assembly tips DVD and fully illustrated instructions.

Superior Heavy-duty Steel Fruit Cage GDN-100

2	6'6"	£260									
2.5	8'	£278	£292								
3	9'9"	£295	£312	£314							
3.5	11'6"	£303	£316	£317	£328						
4	13'	£366	£381	£385	£401	£506					
4.5	14'9"	£379	£383	£399	£412	£513	£532				
5	16'6"	£381	£386	£411	£426	£530	£549	£554			
6	19'6"	£400	£416	£422	£437	£542	£563	£565	£613		
7	23'	£404	£434	£435	£442	£554	£569	£587	£616	£652	
8	26'4"	£492	£519	£523	£544	£691	£713	£719	£769	£803	£1,009
9	29'6"	£497	£524	£532	£551	£701	£728	£731	£781	£817	£1,019
10.5	34'6"	£504	£543	£552	£558	£714	£734	£758	£800	£831	£1,027
12	39'6"	£611	£639	£643	£679	£863	£892	£897	£948	£975	£1,269
14	46'	£640	£651	£656	£703	£901	£918	£924	£991	£1,020	£1,304
17.5	57'6"	£752	£765	£772	£827	£1,062	£1,090	£1,107	£1,190	£1,209	£1,502
	ft	6'6"	8'	9'9"	11'6"	13'	14'9"	16'6"	19'6"	23'	26'4"
m		2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5	6	7	8

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Landscape Award

The Watershed Landscape Project, a three-year environmental and heritage project in the upland area of the South Pennines, has won the UK Landscape Award 2012. It involved hundreds of volunteers and community groups in the restoration of hay meadows and moorlands, the planting of woodlands and the repairing of dry stone walls.

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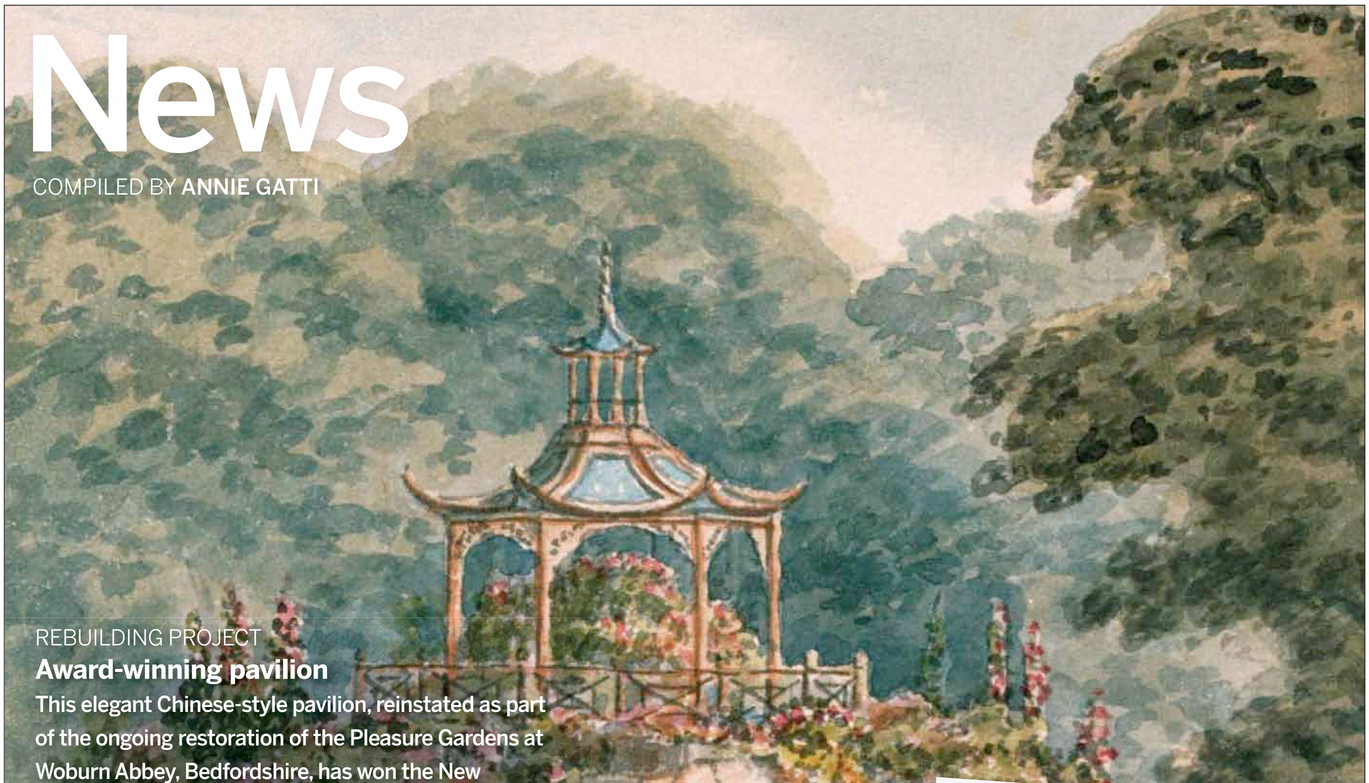
News

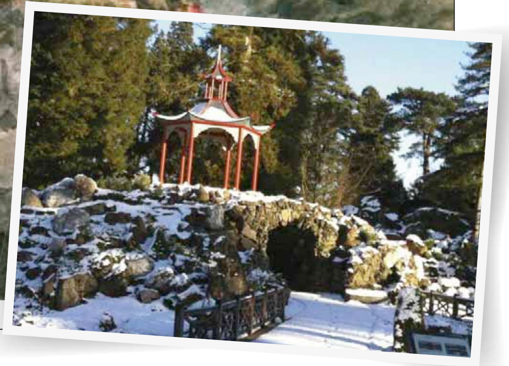
COMPILED BY **ANNIE GATTI**



REBUILDING PROJECT

Award-winning pavilion

This elegant Chinese-style pavilion, reinstated as part of the ongoing restoration of the Pleasure Gardens at Woburn Abbey, Bedfordshire, has won the New Commission category of the 2012 Hudson's Heritage Awards. The pavilion in red, green and gold and made of accoya wood, was originally depicted in Humphry Repton's Red Book plan as the focal point of the rockery, but only survived for about 20 years before it was cleared away to create a more 'natural' look. The rockery has been replanted with hollyhocks, as shown in this Repton illustration, box balls and cloud-pruned *Ilex crenata*.

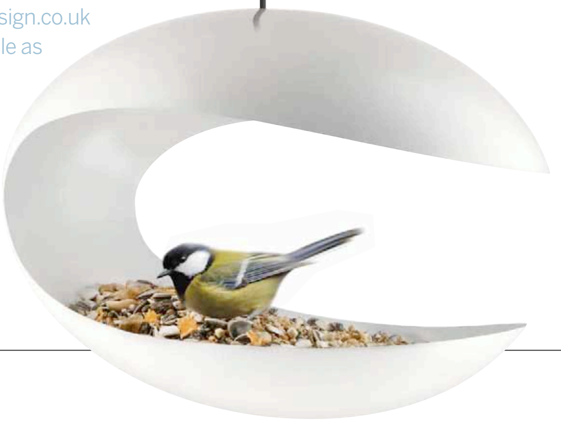


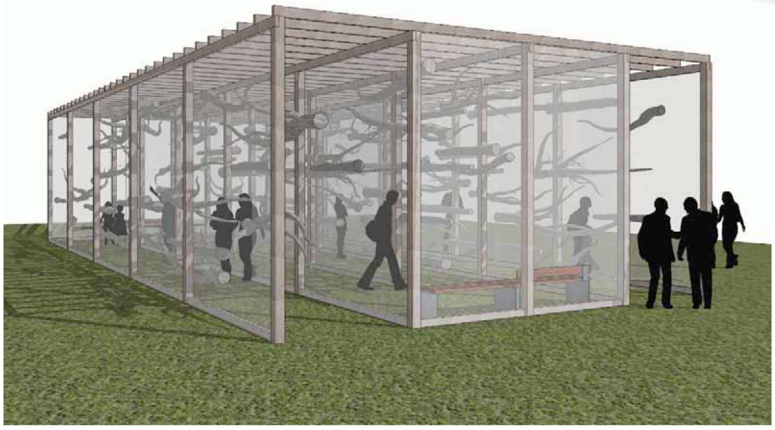
REPTON ILLUSTRATION REPRODUCED BY KIND PERMISSION OF HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF BEDFORD AND THE TRUSTEES OF THE BEDFORD ESTATES

BIRD FEEDER

This elegant hanging bird feeder, in painted stainless steel with a rubber-coated cable by Danish design company Eva Solo, is ideal for the small garden or balcony. The curved top protects the bird seed from the elements while a hole in the bottom allows any moisture that collects to drain out.

£79 from www.madeindesign.co.uk
This design is also available as a standing feeder (£89).





FESTIVAL SELECTION

Hanging garden

Six new gardens have been selected from a record 290 proposals for the 2013 International Garden Festival at Jardins de Métis in Canada. They include 'Dead Garden II', designed by Carlos M. Teixeira and made from the suspended branches and trunks of trees widely grown in Quebec. The festival runs from 22 June to 29 September. www.refordgardens.com/english/festival/edition.php

BESPOKE HOBBIT HOUSE

This rustic garden den, made from a framework of hardwood timbers sourced from a Northamptonshire wood, looks as if it has stepped out of the pages of a children's fairy story. In fact it includes double glazed windows, a woodburner and chimney and is wired for electricity. It is capped with a self-watering wildflower roof that overhangs to provide a sheltered verandah. Each of these hobbit houses is unique.

Gnarlyoak dens start at £20,000 and take approximately four weeks to make.
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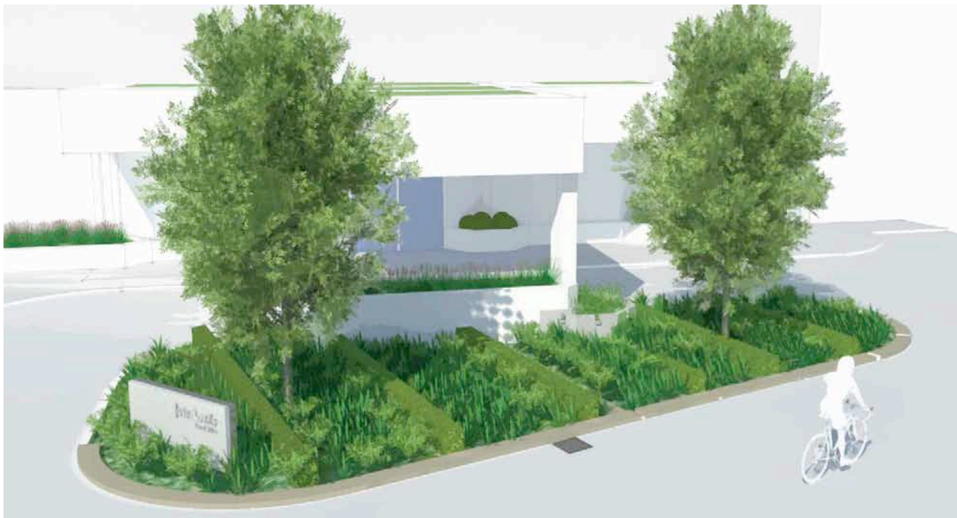
GARDEN VISITS

Book now

The spring and summer programme of garden visits organised by the Garden Museum is selling out fast. Book now for a day exploring the work of Todd Longstaffe-Gowan and a tour of the redesigned Kensington Palace Gardens (below) and a private garden in Notting Hill (8 May). In June Tom Stuart-Smith leads a tour of the 18th-century house at Southill Park near Biggleswade in Bedfordshire, followed by a visit to the garden at Glebe House (7 June), with its sunken yew garden, which he designed. To book these and later garden visits go to www.gardenmuseum.org.uk; tel 020 7401 8865.



DEMONSTRATION GARDEN

Rain absorber

A rain garden is being planted up this spring on a formerly concreted site outside the headquarters of the John Lewis Partnership in Victoria, London. The 75 sq m green space, containing a stormwater planter to divert water from the roof of the building's portico, was designed by Nigel Dunnett and the Landscape Agency for Victoria BID (Business Improvement District). It will serve as a demonstration rain garden while improving biodiversity and absorbing rainwater. The project has received support from John Lewis, Natural England and the Mayor of London via the regeneration agency, Cross River Partnership.

Notebook

- **The Hellebore and Spring Bulbs Open Day** at Gresgarth Hall, Lancaster, offers the chance to buy some of the rare trees and shrubs collected by owner Arabella Lennox-Boyd. Specialist nurseries The Walled Garden in Hornby and Summerdale House will also be there selling shade-loving plants and herbaceous perennials. 10 March, 11am-3.30pm. www.arabellalennoxboyd.com/gresgarth/public.html
- **Dr Beverly Glover is the new Director** of Cambridge University Botanic Garden. She is currently Reader in Evolution and Development at the university's Department of Plant Sciences and was awarded the Linnean Society Bicentenary Medal in 2010.
- **A new programme of courses at West Dean College** in West Sussex, shows gardeners how to create their own art and craft works for the garden. Book now for Metalwork for the Garden (16-21 June), Garden Mosaics (27-30 June), Sculptural Willow for the Garden (1-3 July). Tel 0844 4994408; www.westdean.org.uk/college. Five per cent discount on courses booked online, 10 per cent discount for new attendees (telephone bookings only).
- **Tim Richardson, director of the Chelsea Fringe Festival**, talks about the inaugural festival and the plans for the 2013 Fringe. 11 March, 7pm at Garden Museum, Vauxhall. London Parks & Gardens Trust, tel 020 7839 3969; www.londongardenstrust.org

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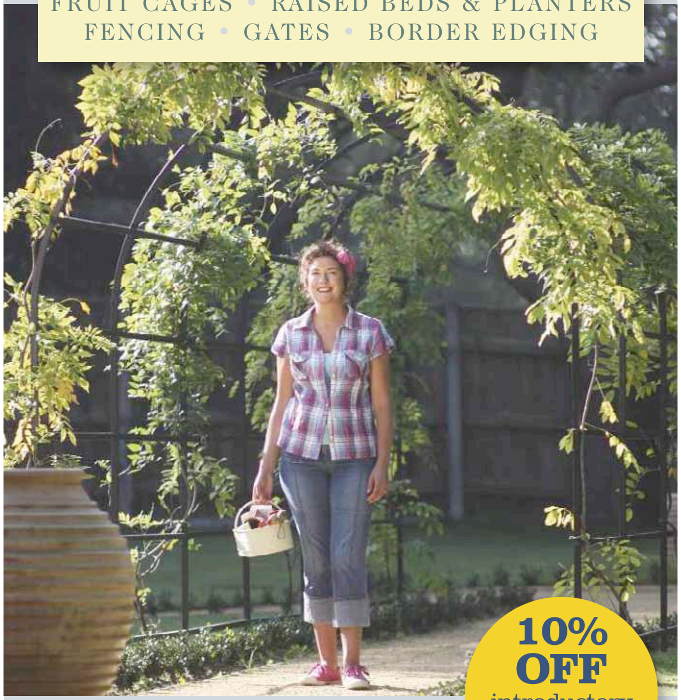

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Maintenance – how low is low?

Gardening can be a balancing act between your desired looks and the time you are able to spend on maintenance. So how do you get impressive results without devoting your whole life to your garden?

WORDS ANNIE GUILFOYLE

Annie Guilfoyle is Director of Garden Design at KLC School of Design. She is also Garden Course Coordinator at West Dean College and runs her own garden design studio. "My clients and their gardens are very diverse. Ranging from tiny urban courtyards to large rural estates, they offer a wide variety of challenges. There is something to learn and discover on every project."

Let's start by correcting a common misconception: there is a difference between low maintenance and no maintenance. As part of a design brief, clients will generally ask for a low maintenance garden – never yet have I been asked to design a high maintenance garden! But how low is low? In truth, what they are imagining is probably little or no maintenance at all, but unless you want a garden that is completely devoid of plant life there is always going to be some level of care required. To avoid creating a garden that may veer out of control, it's worth spending the time to work out exactly what type of maintenance is going to be necessary and what you are able to cope with, both in terms of your time and knowledge.

Here are some considerations to help you understand the level of maintenance that your garden may need and ideas for ways to keep it to a manageable level. Think about the location of the garden and the soil conditions – for example, a heavy clay soil may require considerable work, especially in the early stages of preparing a site for planting, whereas a poor sandy soil is likely to need more feeding and watering once the garden is established. If your garden is very exposed, hedges may be high on your list of requirements. However they are likely to need trimming at least once and maybe twice a year, depending on your chosen plants. Reducing the amount of deciduous planting and increasing the percentage of evergreen may seem like a good idea in order to avoid excessive leaf fall in autumn – but remember that all plants including evergreens have to shed leaves at some point. With evergreens you will have some leaf drop throughout the year, instead of just in the autumn.

Some may think that increasing the lawn area will reduce the amount of work, but this is not necessarily the case. Keeping a lawn looking good, especially if the garden is shady or the drainage is bad, can be quite labour intensive, whereas planting the area with suitable ground cover would mean a lot less fuss.

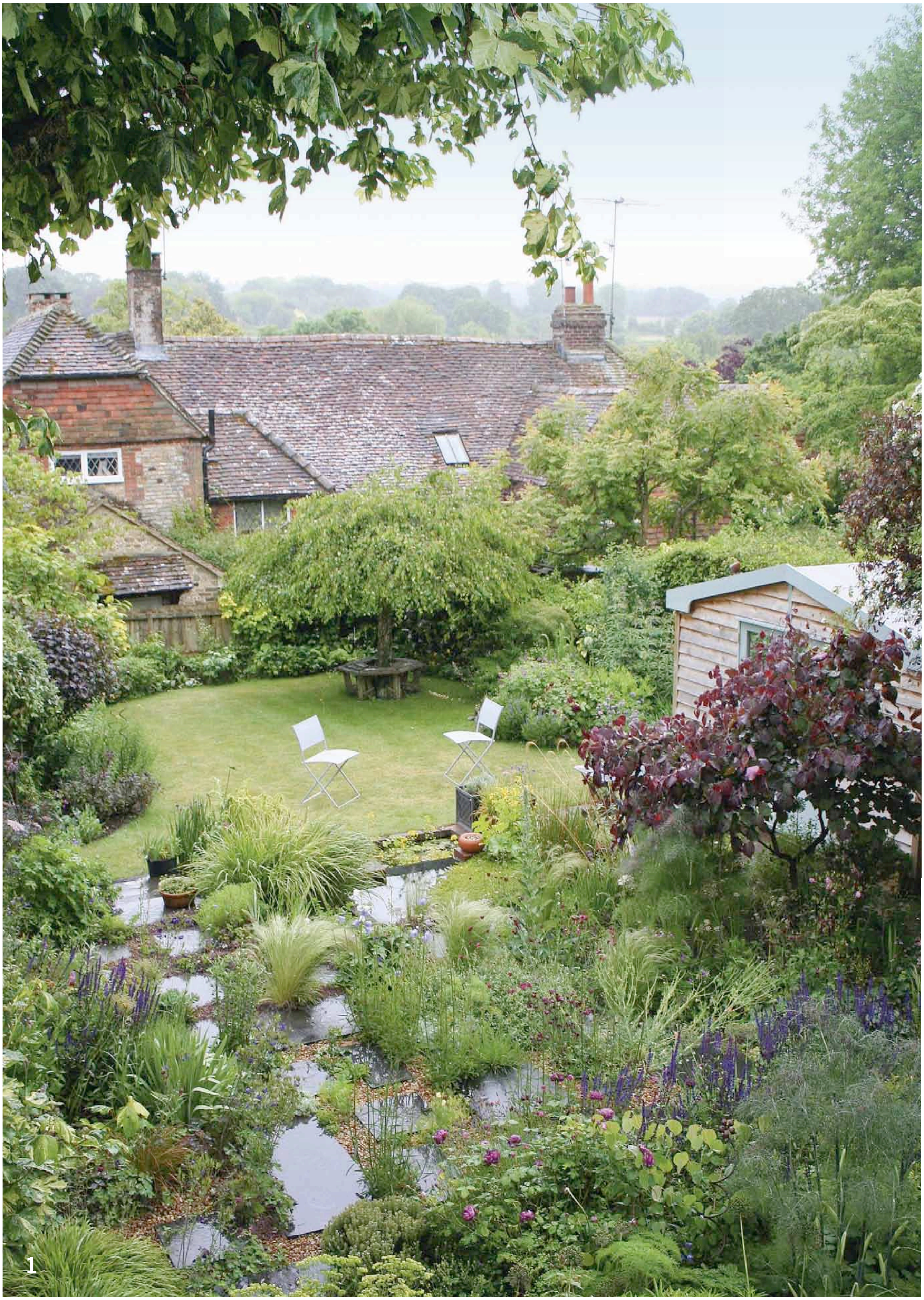
Plant list

While you are still at the planning stage, make a list of all the existing plants and remove the ones that are going to create too much work, for example a shrub such as *Symphoricarpos albus*, which if given time will slowly dominate the garden. It is tempting to select trees and shrubs that establish quickly without giving much thought to their eventual height and spread. The wrong choice could mean you having to prune them back regularly. You will need to take the local climate into consideration, as this will affect plant growth and performance. In a sheltered garden in the south of the country the plants will have a different growth rate to those in a more exposed site in the north.

Continued on page 93 ▷

1 Balancing act

With a client who is a 'plantaholic' but also has a very demanding job, I needed to design a garden that was easy for her to manage but still satisfied her love of plants. A balance between the area for planting and lawn was important.



ANNIE GUILFOYLE

2 Cutting time

Hedges and topiary can add valuable interest and structure to a garden but they also require a lot of maintenance to keep them looking good. At Bury Court in Hampshire this *Buxus* hedge has to be trimmed regularly to keep the intricate shape.

3 One cut

Grasses can be relatively low maintenance in the garden and for many, simply cutting back the dead stems in spring is all you will need to do to keep them growing well.

4 Avoid spreaders

Phalaris arundinacea var. *picta* 'Picta' is such a lovely looking grass but it can take over if you let it. So do your homework and make sure that you avoid the plants that spread too vigorously – or you may regret planting them.

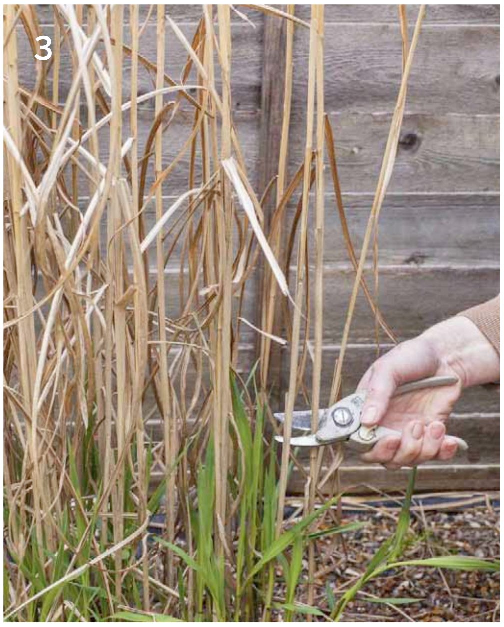
5 Well behaved

There are certain shrubs such as *Choisya* x *dewitteana* 'Aztec Pearl' that I regularly use when clients ask for a low-maintenance garden. I know that they are not going to misbehave and grow too large or too quickly.

6 Autumn leaves

Raking leaves can be an annual task that many people dread, despite the fact that the leaves can be turned into very useful leaf mould. Consider the amount of evergreen and deciduous plants that you want in the garden and try to strike a balance.

2


3

4

2 ANNIE GUILFOYLE; 3&5 MARIANNE MAJERUS; 4&6 CLIVE NICHOLS

Plant suggestions

Here is a list of 'well-behaved' plants that I use regularly.

Shrubs

- *Abelia* x *grandiflora* AGM*
- *Choisya* x *dewitteana* 'Aztec Pearl' AGM
- *Cotoneaster lacteus* AGM
- *Itea ilicifolia* AGM
- *Nandina domestica* AGM
- *Olearia macrodonta* AGM
- *Sarcococca confusa* AGM
- *Syringa microphylla* 'Superba' AGM

Perennials and grasses

- *Astrantia major* (does self-seed but worth it!)
- *Ballota pseudodictamnus* AGM
- *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster'
- *Carex buchananii* AGM
- *Epimedium* x *perralchicum* 'Fröhnleiten'
- *Heuchera* cultivars
- *Liriope muscari* AGM
- *Phlox paniculata* 'David'
- *Salvia* x *sylvestris* 'Mainacht' AGM

Bulbs

- *Allium hollandicum* 'Purple Sensation' AGM
- *Narcissus* 'Petrel'
- *Nectaroscordum siculum*

Great ground cover

- *Ajuga reptans* Black Scallop = 'Binblasca'
- *Asarum europaeum* AGM
- *Carex oshimensis* 'Evergold' AGM
- *Euonymus fortunei* 'Silver Queen'
- *Geranium macrorrhizum* 'White Ness' AGM
- *Luzula sylvatica*
- *Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Nigrescens' AGM
- *Pulmonaria saccharata* 'Smoky Blue'
- *Trachystemon orientalis*
- *Vinca difformis* AGM

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7 High stakes

Delphinium spires add mid-summer drama and height to a border but frequently need staking as they are inclined to grow across their neighbours in a very unsociable manner. Tying in and staking perennials can be very time consuming.

8 Planted pots

Containers are very popular, especially on roofs and balconies, but remember they will require watering on a daily basis in the summer months. These tall pots have been planted with succulents, which can withstand a certain degree of neglect.

9 Rampant climbers

Some climbers such as *Rosa* 'Champney's Pink Cluster' and *Lonicera periclymenum* 'Belgica' are vigorous and require a sturdy structure to scramble over. If they are not pruned correctly, they can become extremely heavy and cumbersome.

10 Best behaviour

Nandina domestica is a handsome evergreen shrub that offers interest all year round with flowers in summer and berries that last well into winter, and best of all it will not outgrow its welcome.

11 Water wise

One way of reducing maintenance is to install an irrigation system, especially if you are away for long periods in the summer. Simple systems can be set up on an automatic timer.

7 ANDREW LAWSON / MMGI; 9 & 10 MARIANNE MAJERUS; 8 CLIVE NICHOLS; 11 FLPA / GARY K SMITH / THE GARDEN COLLECTION

> "Who is going to look after your garden? Think carefuly about the amount of time you can devote to gardening and your level of expertise"

▷ Weeds are often the cause of much concern when it comes to maintenance, so it is worth checking your garden for any evidence of invasive weeds such as ground elder or bindweed. Preventing weed growth is the best way to avoid problems and mulching the beds between the plants or using ground cover is the most effective approach. However, weeds can still manage to establish themselves, so regular inspection and removal will be needed during the growing season before they have the opportunity to set seed.

You may wish to avoid perennials that require staking and trying-in, such as delphiniums; if not supported at the right time they can grow away at rather jaunty angles, flattening their neighbours. Find out if the plants that you would like to use are prone to any particular pests and diseases, as monitoring for potential problems, removing pests and spraying can be quite time consuming.

Beware thugs

Steer clear of plants that are described as 'thugs' or 'invasive' – these are best placed in large gardens, and are for those with the time to keep them in check. Many herbaceous perennials and deciduous grasses will at the very least require cutting back in winter or early spring as the new growth emerges. Some perennials such as heleniums benefit from regular deadheading helping to prolong the flowering period well into late autumn, so it may be best to focus on plants that flower for long periods without the need to remove the spent flowers.

Climbers are the perfect plants for adding vertical interest but some might require a substantial annual prune. A good example is the wonderfully scented honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum belgica* – as each year's growth piles on top of the previous one, it can eventually become weighty enough to pull down a fence. Climbing and rambling roses are very popular but unless they are properly pruned each year they can become unruly – the same of course applies to wisterias. Look for climbers that are not too vigorous such as *Clematis* 'Betty Corning', which are easier to manage.

Who is going to look after your garden? Think carefully about the amount of time you can devote to gardening and your level of expertise. Consider employing a gardener either weekly, monthly or once a season to help with larger tasks. Another option could be to find a company that will come in and train you to take care of your garden under their guidance. Bringing in a gardener is not an admission of defeat; we have some of the finest horticultural training establishments in the world, producing first-rate professional gardeners. If you do want to have the more demanding plants in your garden then consider doing courses on general garden management or more specialised techniques such as pruning. That way you don't have to deny yourself those wonderful needy plants that require more time and expertise. You never know, you may decide that maintaining your garden is more fun and cheaper than the annual membership for the gym. □

NEXT MONTH Year-round colour in the garden

Books for further reading

- *50 High-Impact, Low-Care Garden Plants* by Tracy DiSabato-Aust, Timber Press, £9.99
- *Care-free Plants* Reader's Digest, £14.99
- *Gardener's Essential Plant Guide* by Brian Davis, Silverdale. Out of print but one of the best books for understanding trees, shrubs and climbers – including details on growth rate and maintenance.
- *Low Maintenance Gardening* by Andi Clevely, Frances Lincoln, £9.99
- *Low Maintenance Gardens* by Caroline Tilston, Wiley, £9.99
- *The No-work Garden* by Bob Flowerdew, Kyle Cathie, (out of print but second-hand copies may be available).

Courses

- Try your local botanical gardens for course details.
- The **RHS** hold courses at all their gardens: Wisley, Harlow Carr, Rosemoor and Hyde Hall. Go to www.rhs.org.uk/Courses/Leisure-learning
- For a list of relevant courses go to www.gardensillustrated.com/article/practical/courses-gardeners

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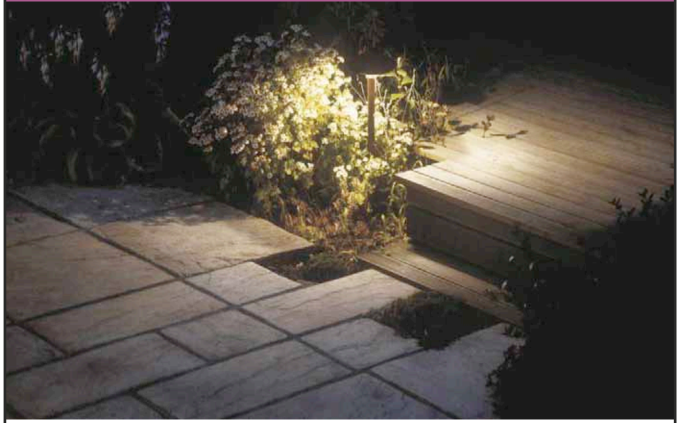

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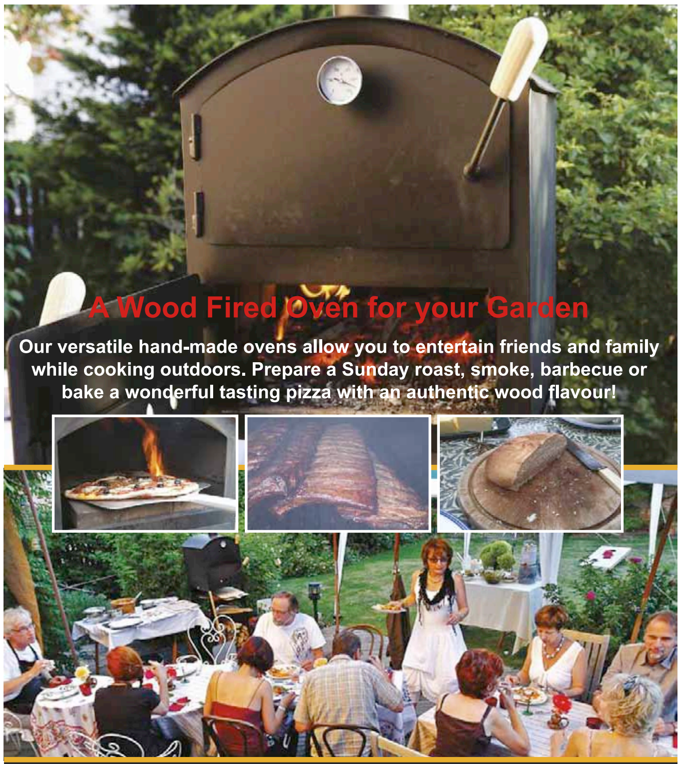

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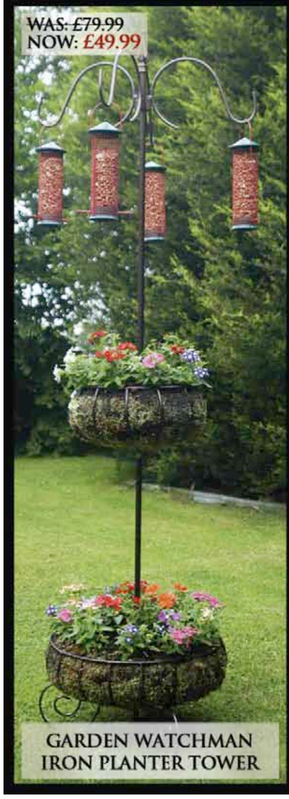

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In his latest book *Powerhouse Plants* Graham Rice selects 510 top performing plants. See our review on page 100.

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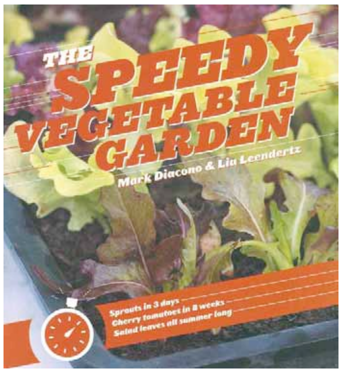
Book reviews

THE SPEEDY VEGETABLE GARDEN

by Mark Diacono and Lia Leendertz
Timber Press, £14.99
ISBN 978-1604693263


THE SPEEDY VEGETABLE GARDEN
Mark Diacono & Lia Leendertz
Sprouts in 3 days
Cherry tomatoes in 8 weeks
Salad leaves all summer long

GREEN IN SNOW
17/2

The authors include suggestions for many unusual edibles, including the oriental Mustard 'Green in Snow'.

Authors Mark Diacono (he of Otter Farm fame) and Lia Leendertz (of the *Guardian*) are both multi-award-winning gardening journalists, so it's not surprising that this book is a must-have for anyone interested in growing their own food. At both ends of the spectrum – if you are lucky enough to have a greenhouse and would like to make more use of it, or if you only have a balcony or a flat windowsill, you can still grow many of the plants mentioned in the book because you don't necessarily need a lot of space.

And of course, if you are impatient, this book also addresses the problem: 'There is no suffering here,' the authors tell us, the book is about 'plants that are at their best grown quickly'.

Here you'll find advice on soaks and sprouts, micro greens – whose flavours are actually more intense when eaten young, edible flowers, cut-and-come-again salads, as well as quick-harvest vegetables. Nothing recommended is complicated to do and all of it is very tasty (there are good nutritional reasons to try things such as sprouted seeds too, since sprouted seeds have more vitamins and minerals than the dry version).

What I particularly like about this book is that you get the authors' experience in growing varieties of food that you might not know about. For example, growing Erbette (an Italian leaf salad) instead of spinach – it's part lettuce, part chard and matures quickly in little over a month. When it comes to flowers, I had no idea that daylilies were edible: it seems they have 'a satisfying crunch and a flavour somewhere between sweet lettuce, radish and green bean'.

The photographs in this book are beautiful as well as practical and make you want to try everything – Diacono in particular is a talented photographer. My only minor – and this is very minor – niggle is that the fonts used in the headings are more 'down to earth' than they are 'stylish'.

There are recipes included with each section. Nutty sprout coleslaw is delicious; chocolate and beetroot brownie is easy to make and went down well; stuffed tempura courgette flowers is a favourite.

This is definitely a book to order and have at your side when you are poring over seed catalogues, or are about to make a visit to the garden centre. There's lots to do and try that's new.

Lila Das Gupta is a freelance journalist specialising in gardens

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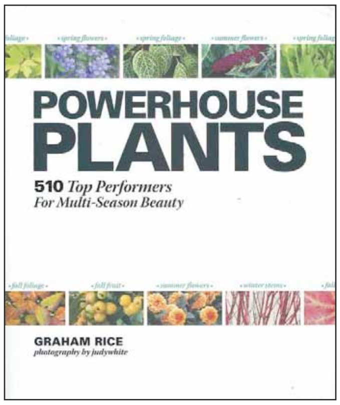
Book reviews

POWERHOUSE PLANTS

by Graham Rice
Timber Press, £16.99
ISBN 978-1604692105



Graham Rice is a masterful, Kew-trained plantsman who manages to garden in Northamptonshire in England and Pennsylvania in America. This experience puts him in a unique position to put together a gardening book that satisfies Britain and America in equal measures. There's 510 plants mentioned for more than just flowers. I really admire this approach, for so many gardeners concentrate on fleeting flower while ignoring key attributes like foliage, young buds, bark and autumn colour. It has taken me decades to refine this approach. I love *Aster divaricatus* for instance, for its wiry dark stems and thistly seed heads, rather than its small white flowers, which are incidental.

Rice's message is clear: a good plant delivers through the seasons. Each plant has its seasonal charms set out in bullet points so that the peony is clearly shown to offer spring shoots, summer flowers and autumn foliage, colour and fruits. Having to tackle such a diverse genus, containing both perennials and deciduous shrubs, is no easy task, so a section follows that breaks them up. The sumptuous *Paeonia lactiflora* hybrids and several other species are listed and some are illustrated with excellent photographs taken by Graham's wife, Judy White.

The most useful part of this book is the list of essentials, again bullet-pointed. The advice is clear, covering growing conditions, the separate pruning regimes and the perfect position for peonies for instance. Inevitably with a transatlantic text there are American spellings, but this doesn't detract from the quality of the accurate text.

I also admire the wide choice of plants. Well, almost always – the section on phloxes seemed to contain far too many variegated ones! In general though, the choices are excellent and contain available, first-rate performers at the top of their individual trees. Lots of plants are mentioned so this book would be an excellent present for a novice gardener who is unsure what to grow. However, experienced gardeners will also find *Powerhouse Plants* extremely useful.

Val Bourne is a freelance writer specialising in gardens.

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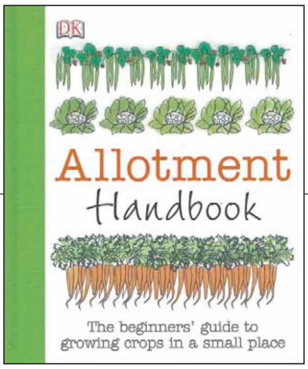
evergreen cotoneaster



ALLOTMENT HANDBOOK

Dorling Kindersley, £14.99
ISBN 978-1409382980

You could question whether anyone needs another allotment book, but I like this one. The allotment handbook is another workhorse from publisher DK, practical and sensible in its advice and layout. It's a friendly approach, clearly written by people who are passionate about their patch.

It starts with that overgrown mess you've inherited – how to assess the plot, what to salvage and what to get rid of. Step by step, page by page, the beginner allotmenteer will truly gain confidence. I love the practical information on building frames, raised beds and paths. It's solid advice that is easy to follow.

It's a family book, and there are charming tips on encouraging your kids to garden – like using old snail shells to cover bamboo canes so they don't poke anyone's eye out.

There's the prerequisite directory of vegetables, fruits and flowers with lots of advice on varieties, tips on routine care and how to store the produce.

It rounds everything off with a gallery of rogues, the obvious pests and diseases, a little on fruit pruning and propagating. Beginners, who may at the start of this book feel daunted by the path ahead, will soon be on the way to becoming a grower.

Alys Fowler is a gardening writer and television presenter.

book offer

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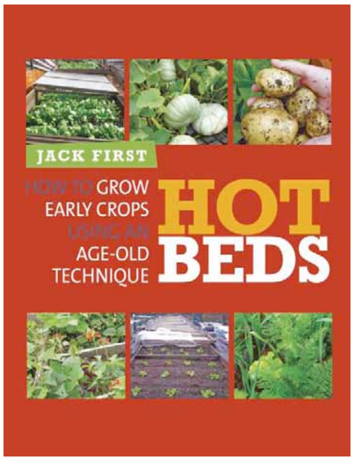
HOT BEDS

by Jack First
Green Books, £9.95
ISBN 978-0857841063



I have waited a long time for this book, having tried and mostly failed at any attempt at a hot bed. You can find plenty of historic texts telling you about the joys of early cropping or of how Paris fed most of Europe using this system, but the actual ins and outs, the size, depth or management of the frames, was often a little obscure.

Jack First has done all the hard work; he's taken the body of work (mostly out of print, turn-of-the-century texts) and translated them for a modern user. The result is this lovely book and one imagines, many happy customers, as First runs a market garden and teaches workshops on hot beds. His authority on the subject is evident in the detailed descriptions and analysis of the various methods used.

The principle of a hot bed is that the heat given off from decomposing material, usually horse manure and stable bedding, is used to force crops. First claims that by using his system you can advance your sowing time in Yorkshire from mid May outside to February under the frames. He grows an impressive array of vegetables – cucumbers, tomatoes, French beans and squashes – all the usual suspects that are hard to achieve outside the further north you go.

One of the drawbacks of a hot bed is getting hold of large amounts of fresh manure. First is aware that not everyone has a stable nearby and has an impressive list of alternatives. Everything from old clothes, cardboard and wool to sawdust and dry leaves. Managing this free heat, that doesn't last forever, is key to an efficient system. And it's all covered, despite it being a slight book. I feel confident that success will be mine this time round.

Polytunnels and glasshouses are still expensive and this option does require time to gather all the materials. However, if First's plot is anything to go by, the results are quite something.

Most importantly, if the last few summers are the start of a pattern we must get used to, then this gem of a book may mean a lot more than just a fascinating insight into a traditional technique.

Alys Fowler is a gardening writer and television presenter.

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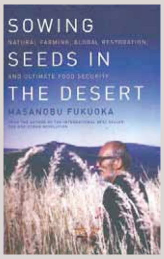
Other recently released books for gardeners



SOWING SEEDS IN THE DESERT
by Masanobu Fukuoka
Chelsea Green, £18.95
ISBN 978-1603584180
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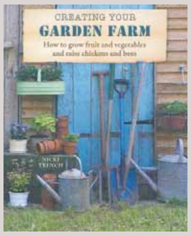
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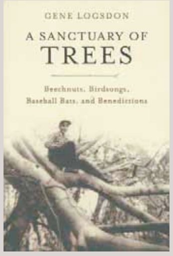

A SANCTUARY OF TREES
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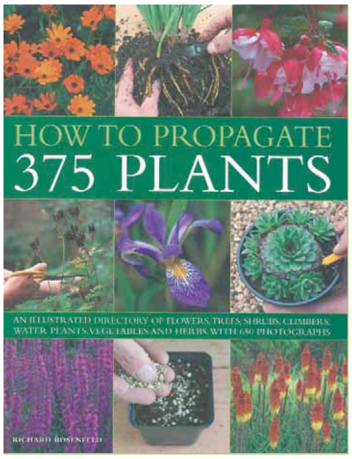
Book reviews

HOW TO PROPAGATE 375 PLANTS

by Richard Rosenfeld
Southwater, £8.99
ISBN 978-1780191850


HOW TO PROPAGATE
375 PLANTS
AN ILLUSTRATED DIRECTORY OF FLOWERS, TREES, SHRUBS, CLIMBERS, WATER PLANTS, VEGETABLES AND HERBS, WITH 680 PHOTOGRAPHS
RICHARD ROSENFELD

Propagation is a popular activity among gardeners and this is reflected in horticultural literature; *How to Propagate 375 Plants* joins a host of publications on the subject, including two previous efforts by its author.

What sets it apart is that it is concerned as much with the 'why' as with the 'how' of the title. The aim of the book is to demonstrate how the various arts of propagation can be harnessed to populate our gardens cheaply and effectively. With virtually no preamble, the book plunges into its directory of plants – 375 popular genera of garden plants alphabetically arranged under a number of subheadings – 'Flowers and foliage plants' (including herbaceous perennials, annuals and bulbs), 'Trees, shrubs and climbers' etc.

Each entry includes a general discussion of cultural requirements and the author's pick of species and cultivars with inspirational suggestions on how to use them to best affect in your garden – thus the scope of the book becomes rather broad. The required propagation techniques are dealt with as they arise at the end of each entry rather than being discussed separately in their own right. The author's wide-ranging knowledge and enthusiasm for plants shines throughout these pages, but the technical advice offered does tend to feel like something of an afterthought. The entry for *Daphne*, for instance, carries no mention of such intricacies as the need to stratify the seed, the various potential causes of sterility, of the viral infections that can blight attempts to strike cuttings, or of the fruit's toxic pulp.

The book is directed at the novice, its tenor encouraging and inspirational rather than didactic – but it can ultimately be self-defeating to downplay the actual difficulties and complexities entailed in the execution of a practical subject. Aftercare, for instance, is a crucial factor in successful propagation, and requires greater judgement and experience than the act of taking cuttings – yet it receives scant attention here.

How to Propagate 375 Plants is a nicely produced, inexpensive book. It offers the reader inspiration and encouragement and makes the link between the practice of propagation, and the potential garden use of the plants produced, refreshingly explicit. However, as far as detailed instruction is concerned, it falls slightly short of delivering the promise inherent in its title.

Rory Dusoir is a writer and Kew-trained gardener.

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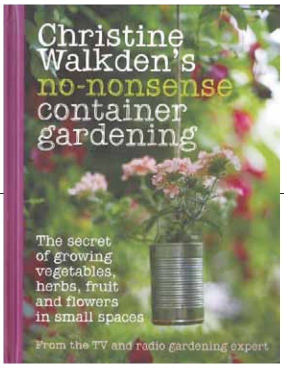
Christine Walkden's
no-nonsense
container
gardening
The secret of growing vegetables, herbs, fruit and flowers in small spaces
From the TV and radio gardening expert

CHRISTINE WALKDEN'S NO-NONSENSE CONTAINER GARDENING

by Christine Walkden
Simon & Schuster, £20
ISBN 978-0857206923

As this book's title suggests, there is plenty of straightforward practical advice on the subject of growing plants in containers from this eminently straightforward and practical gardener, but the nice thing is that the book is as inviting as it is informative. Photographs of beautifully planted containers of every shape, size and origin (including some inspired recycling) reinvigorated my enthusiasm for this versatile style of gardening.

Too often books on the subject begin and end with the decorative ideas and are a bit short on the growing side of things, but with Christine you get a lifetime of hands-on gardening expertise, so that even a novice gardener could use it as a handbook. I particularly liked 'Christine's Tips', including the use of square pots in windy locations as they are more stable.

All tastes are catered for, so whether you want to dabble with a bit of grow-your-own, create a long-term evergreen display or have a go at growing something exotic, you will find both the inspiration and the growing methods within these covers.

Stephanie Donaldson is a writer specialising in organic methods.

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Star letter

In praise of volunteering

I have been a volunteer at Loseley Park's walled garden, near Compton outside Guildford, for some years and cannot praise highly enough the people I worked with. The head gardener, Burney, is always appreciative of the time you put in, however small it is, and makes sure the jobs are not repetitive or too much like hard work. You also learn about horticulture and can wander from the rose garden, culinary, medicinal, white and vegetable gardens, so it is a varied experience. Being a volunteer has enriched my soul. I feel very much appreciated and so many places open to the public would not be what they are without many hours of volunteer dedication. The National Trust, for example, welcomes volunteers, as does RHS Wisley, so do look at this option if you want some fresh air and the chance to learn something new. It is very worthwhile and you will extend your list of like-minded friends sharing the same values in life.

Chantal Chenede, Surrey

ASH DIEBACK

Tree fears

Our ash tree, which is registered with the Woodland Trust and stands sentinel in the back corner of our garden, is truly magnificent and is a perching station for innumerable birds crossing the fields to the next piece of hedge or wood. It is a landmark for miles around. Since the threat of ash dieback I have been using plant essences on it, administered in water to the roots, a treatment akin to homeopathy, but as a preventative measure. It seems totally irresponsible that Britain has been allowing a steady traffic of sapling ash, back and forth, to the continent for years when the disease has been rife in a number of European countries. I can only hope that my experimental treatment helps to strengthen our ancient and remarkable tree.

Liz Faulkner, Dumfries

HELLEBORES

Self-discipline

Frank Ronan has hit the nail on the head in his article 'The rule of one' (issue 194). His behaviour encapsulates mine and brought a smile to my face. I have an overwhelming urge to lift up every hellebore flower's head in the quest for something even more beautiful or unusual. Not just content with looking at the inside, the backs of the flowers also have an importance when choosing, having subtle flushes of colour and varying degrees of elegance. Foliage varies too. This extends the time spent choosing until a decision has to be reached. Buying only one becomes impossible and besides, one would be lonely on its journey home! I also have expensive tastes but a season of flowering that lasts through the winter months, makes that a small price to pay for this beautiful plant.

Sue Lander, by email

WRITE TO US & WIN

The star letter wins a Haws 4.5 Litre Professional Long Reach Can, worth £60, made from galvanised metal, then powder-coated for strength and long life. For details of Haws' full range go to www.haws.co.uk

CORRECTIONS

In '25 favourite English gardens', (issue 193, page 46), when discussing Shute Barton House at Donhead St Mary, we gave the web address for Shute House in East Devon. There is no web address for Shute Barton House. The telephone number given is correct.

In the same issue, in our feature on Ninfa (page 66), we wrongly named Roffredo and Marguerite Caetani's son Camillo as 'Rafaelo'. In addition Esme Howard is not the son of Hubert and Lelia Howard, but the nephew. We apologise for these errors.

TALKING POINT

Steve Alton wonders if native plant species are really always best

Steve Alton, formerly head of the Millennium Seed Bank, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, now runs the consultancy Sussex Nature.

Pollinating insects are in trouble – honey yields were down 72 per cent last year – and one of the problems facing them is lack of forage. But we can help – by planting the right flower species. I've spent 20 years of my career telling people that native species are best. But I'm going to stick my neck out here and say: native is best, except when it isn't. My argument goes a little like this.

- As far as most pollinators are concerned, nectar is nectar and pollen is pollen, regardless of its geographic origins.
- Flower mixes for urban use – selected to include both native and non-native species – provide both pollinator appeal and length of flowering season; flowering through to the first frosts and avoiding the issue of late-season untidiness.
- Creating any kind of vegetation in an urban environment is an artificial act, so why not create as well as you can?

I'd never recommend the use of non-native mixes in a rural setting; but in urban areas if we're going to plant habitat for pollinators, then surely we must plant the very best?

- What's your view? Write to us by post or email (details above).

We reserve the right to edit letters.

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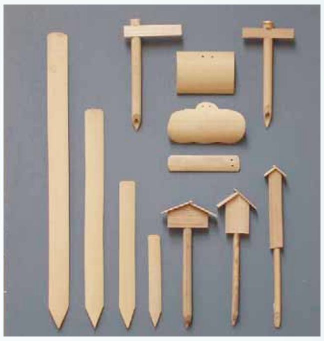

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Wooden Keyrings : 90 Locations

Garden Friends : Kingfisher, Hare, Cats, Chickens, etc

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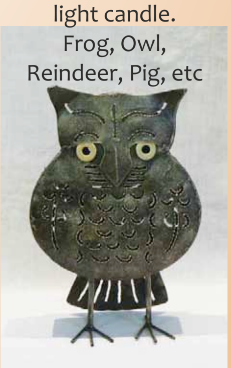
BEWARE OF THE PUSSY
I'M IN THE STABLES
WERE IN THE GARDEN
COME TO THE BACK DOOR
PLEASE SHUT THE GATE
JE SUIS DANS LE JARDIN

Hanging Wooden Signs : 60 Texts

Hope
Happiness
Prosperity
Success
Dreams
Love You
Believe

Stone Lanels : 50 Texts

Candle Lanterns with a small tray inside for a tea light candle.
Frog, Owl, Reindeer, Pig, etc



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Spring is the perfect time of year to start your lawn-care routine, and here's the opportunity to win both a mower and scarifier from one of the top lawnmower manufacturers that will help you keep your lawn in top condition.

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- For more information on the full Hayter range, including stockists, call 01279 723444 or visit www.hayter.co.uk

How to enter

For your chance to win please answer the following question.
What is the botanical genus of the dog-toothed violet?

Enter by post

Send a postcard with your answer, along with your name, address, postcode and contact details to:
Gardens Illustrated 195/Hayter Mower,
PO Box 501, Leicester LE94 0AA

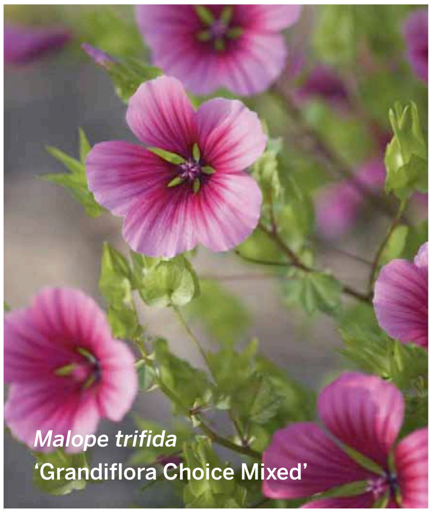
Enter online www.gardensillustrated.com

Closing date 31 March 2013

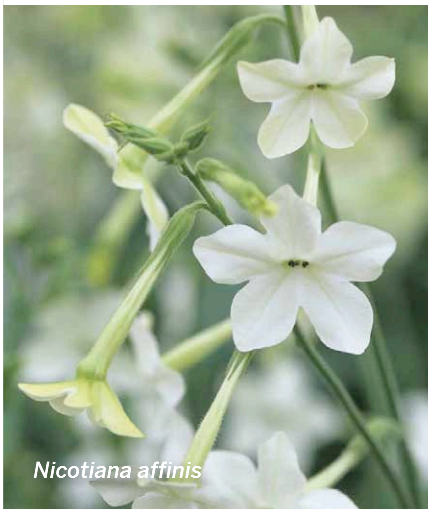
TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1 The promoter is Immediate Media Company Bristol. **2** Entrants must be UK residents aged 18 years or older, excluding the promoter's employees **3** The closing date for entries is 11.59pm on 31 March 2013. Entries received after the closing date of the promotion will not be considered. **4** By entering the promotion, the participants agree to be bound by all the rules of the promotion. **5** Entrants must supply to Immediate Media Co their full name, email address and daytime telephone number. The Promoter will use entrants' personal details in accordance with the Immediate Privacy Policy (www.immediatemedia.co.uk/privacy). **6** Only one entry will be permitted per person, regardless of method of entry. **7** The winning entrant will be the first correct entry drawn at random from all the correct entries after the closing date. The draw is final and no correspondence will be entered into. The winner will be notified within 10 days of the close of the promotion by post/telephone/email. **8** There is one prize of a Hayter Spirit 41 lawnmower plus a Scarifier. It will be delivered to the winner by the nearest Hayter supplier. **9** There is no cash alternative and the prize will not be transferable. The prize must be taken as stated and cannot be deferred. The Promoter reserves the right to substitute the prize with one of the same or greater value. **10** For details of the winner send an SAE to Immediate Media Company Bristol within two months of the closing date. **11** The Promoter does not accept any responsibility for lost, delayed or fraudulent entries. **12** If the winner is unable to be contacted within 30 days of the promotion's closing date, the Promoter reserves the right to offer the prize to a runner up, or to re-offer the prize in any future promotion. **13** The Promoter excludes liability to the full extent permitted by law for any loss, damage or injury occurring to the participant arising from his or her entry into the promotion or occurring to the winner arising from his or her acceptance of a prize. **14** The promotion is subject to the laws of England. **15** Immediate Media Company Limited (publishers of *Gardens Illustrated*) would love to keep you informed by post or telephone of special offers and promotions from the Immediate Media Company Group. Please write 'Do not contact Immediate Media Co Ltd' if you would prefer not to receive these. *Gardens Illustrated* would like to keep you informed of newsletters, special offers and other promotions by email or text message. Please write your email address and mobile number on your postcard if you would like to receive these. You may unsubscribe from these at any time. Hayter would like to keep you informed by email, post or phone of their special offers and promotions. Please write 'Do not contact Hayter' on your entry if you would prefer not to receive these.

OFFER 2 **15% off Chiltern Seeds**


Malope trifida 'Grandiflora Choice Mixed'

Ammi majus


Nicotiana affinis

Amaranthus 'Hopi Red Dye'

PERNILLA BERGDAHL / GAP PHOTOS: MADDIE THORNHILL / GAP PHOTOS:ANDREW LAWSON / THE GARDEN COLLECTION: GILLES DELACROIX / GARDEN WORLD IMAGES

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2013
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To get the seed sowing season off to a good start Chiltern Seeds are offering readers a 15% discount on all seed purchases. You could get your vegetable patch going with a new white pumpkin 'Snowman', or perhaps you've been inspired by our feature on growing your own cut flowers (see page 64). Featured plants that Chiltern Seeds stock include those pictured here.

To gain your 15% discount go to **www.chilternseeds.co.uk** and choose your seeds from their full range of vegetable and flower seed. Then use the code **GIL13** when prompted and the discount will be applied.

Offer valid until 31 March 2013

To request a copy of the 2013 catalogue either go to www.chilternseeds.co.uk or call 01491 824675.

OFFER 3 **Win one of ten tubes of GroChar Soil Improver**

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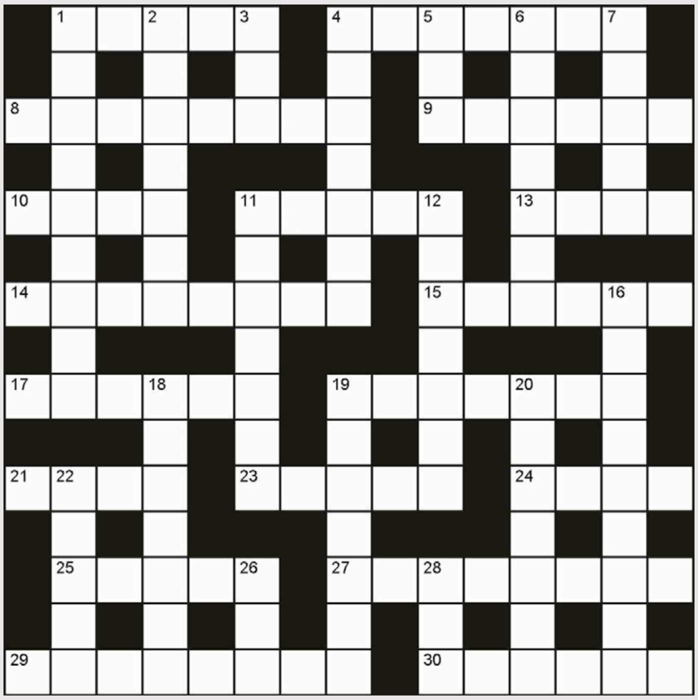
(a) Biochar
(b) Peat
(c) Topsoil
There are ten prizes, each of a 1kg tube of Carbon Gold Concentrated Biochar Soil Improver worth £6.99.
Closing date 29 March 2013

TERMS AND CONDITIONS
The closing dates for entries is 11.59pm on 29 March 2013. Carbon Gold is committed to safeguarding the privacy of all competition entrants. They will only use the information that they collect about you lawfully (in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998). Carbon Gold will not sell, rent, or lease your personally identifiable information to any other party such as a business partner or a related third party company unless you have given permission to do so. Carbon Gold process personal information collected via grochar@carbongold.com for the purposes of providing *Gardens Illustrated* readers a chance to win and providing all entrants with information about the products we offer. If you would prefer not to receive this information, please include the words 'NO THANKS' in your email. Ten entrants having answered the question correctly will be selected at random following the closing date. Winners will be notified by email and please allow up to 7 working days for UK mainland, Islands, Scottish Highlands and Northern Ireland for your free 1kg tube of GroChar Soil Improver to arrive. Carbon Gold are sorry to advise that they are unable to process winners to a PO Box address or if outside of the UK.

Crossword



ACROSS

1 Like gritty, free-draining soil – and inside shrubbery's extremes (5)

4 Tree of *Carya* genus in the walnut family (7)

8/15 Common name for *Erythronium dens-canis*, profiled this month (8,6)

9 Supports eg a floppy plant? Tip: use rocks! (4,2)

10 Area of land enclosed by Virginia creeper (4)

11 Shoot small bunch of herbs? (5)

13 Small organism – when multiplied, a blooming nuisance on ponds, etc! (4)

14 Genus of milkwort plants – part of monopoly (*Galanthus*) (8)

15 See 8ac.

17 As parts of nasturtiums, etc are, consumers will confirm! (6)

19 True member of genus *Abies* (3,4)

21 Bamboo cane by another name – starts to curl under leaf mulch (4)

23 Plant with large, showy flowers – puts energy initially in small horse (5)

24 Uses a spade – and taunts? (4)

25 __ bean classified as *Vicia faba* (5)

27 Fruit tree growers might go up the wall using this method? (8)

29 Leaf spots of smut-affected plants – which are painful underfoot! (8)

30 An infusion of herbs or spices – in effect is an elixir (6)

DOWN

1 Crab apple with pure white flowers – cow unsold, oddly (9)

2 Orchard of eg Kentish cobnuts – Sissinghurst's is famous (7)

3 Somerset river ... in Rye? Odd! (3)

4 Genus of plant also called lacebark – gets hair and hoe tangled! (7)

5/19 A snip for the gardener, they make a blooming good show indoors! (3,7)

6 In propagator eg another wild marjoram (7)

7 Not yet mature – you put on middle of fungus (5)

11 eg provide cane support for plant (5,2)

12 Monet's garden location: good new vinery (7)

16 Always full of envy for a tree that doesn't shed its leaves (9)

18 Tree-like grasses – some 200 varieties are in France's Bambouseraie (7)

19 See 5dn.

20 Sieves soil and sets a poser? (7)

22 Flat-topped inflorescence of eg carrot – sort of blue round start of March (5)

26 Colour obtained from eg madder roots (3)

28 Julia Wylie suggests plants for one – cannabis! (3)

SOLUTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S CROSSWORD WILL BE PRINTED NEXT MONTH

FEBRUARY'S SOLUTIONS

ACROSS: 1 Crocus **5** Garrett **9/27** Dear Anja **10** Salad **11** Arum **12** Campion **13** Crambe **14** Cloche **16** Helenium **18** Earths up **20** Pistil **23** Ice plant **25** Curd **26** Reeds **29** Annual **30/21** Sweet Violet.

DOWN: 2 Rue **3** Carum **4** Sessile **5** Galanthophiles **6** Radical **7** Elaeagnus **8** Thumb **12** Calla **15** Cotyledon **17** Union **19** Setaria **20** Presses **22** Inula **24** Leave **28** Jet.

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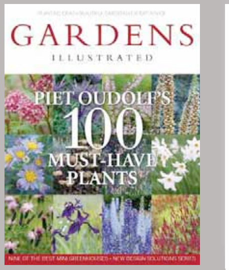

JANUARY 2013
Gardening trends for the year ahead; 25 of the best English gardens to visit; garden inspiration from around the world; planting ideas from a design masterpiece.

FEBRUARY 2013
Piet Oudolf's 100 must-have plants; nine of the best mini-greenhouses; the best violas profiled; snowdrops at The Garden House; early spring at Dial Park in Worcestershire.

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Bringing in Spring

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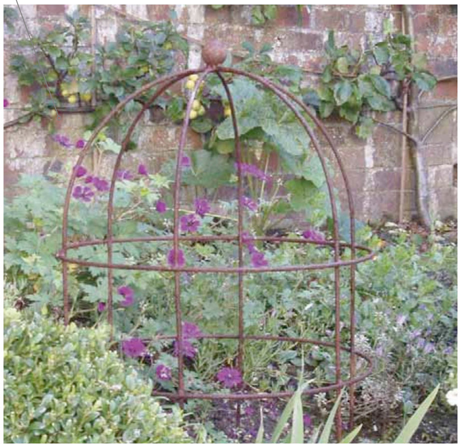

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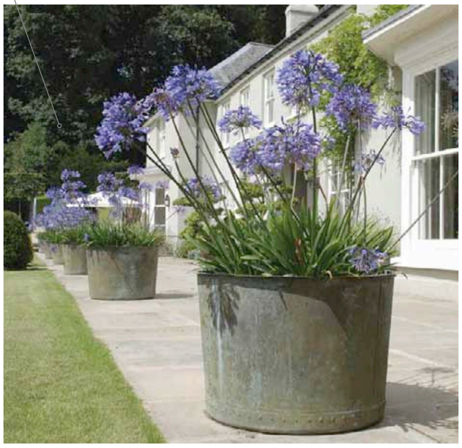

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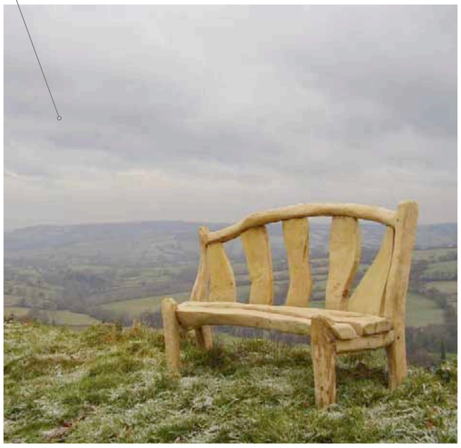

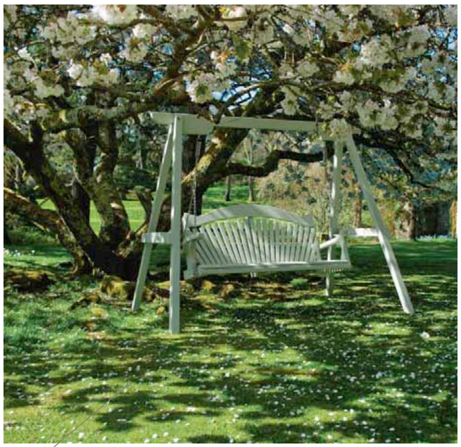

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Transform a corner of your garden into a relaxing haven with a quintessentially English swing seat. The Harmony shown here is made from durable, rot-proof , FSC certified pine and is painted in Farrow & Ball's Mizzle for an elegant finish. It can be left outside all year round.

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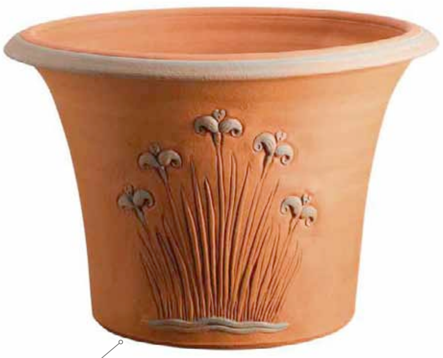

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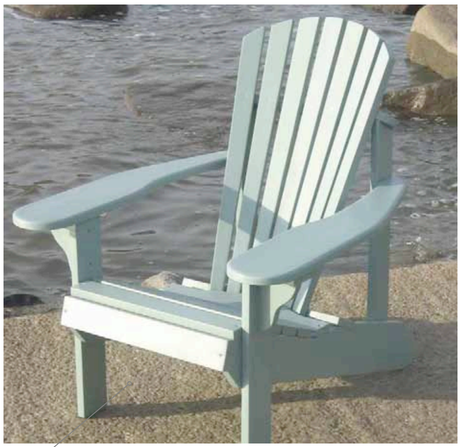

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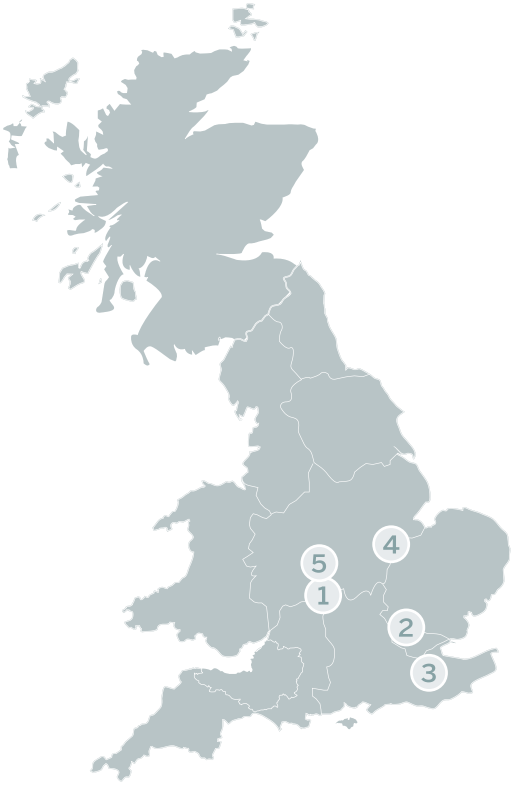

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ADDRESS **Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire GL56 9AB**
TEL **01386 701441** WEBSITE **www.batsarb.co.uk**

2. HATFIELD HOUSE

The garden at Hatfield House dates from the early 17th century when Robert Cecil employed John Tradescant the Elder. The Woodland Garden is at its best in spring with bluebells and daffodils. Enjoy the Sundial Garden, West Parterre and Old Palace Garden adjoining the Tudor Palace. Visitor season begins 30th March. See website for opening times.

ADDRESS **Hatfield, Hertfordshire AL9 5NQ**
TEL **01707 287010** WEBSITE **www.hatfield-house.co.uk**

3. HEVER CASTLE

Bring all the family to celebrate spring at romantic Hever Castle, childhood home of Anne Boleyn. The Annual Easter Egg Trail from 29 March – 1 April is a great opportunity to explore the gardens with drifts of daffodils and spring planting as you hunt for clues to claim your egg.

ADDRESS **Hever Castle, Hever, Nr Edenbridge, Kent TN8 7NG**
TEL **01732 865224** WEBSITE **www.hevercastle.co.uk**

4. DEENE PARK

The gardens at Deene Park, home of the Brudenell family since 1514, will be open on Sunday 7 April for Daffodil Day. Visitors will have the opportunity to see the uplifting display of golden daffodils in the gardens, along with a scattering of hellebores and primroses.

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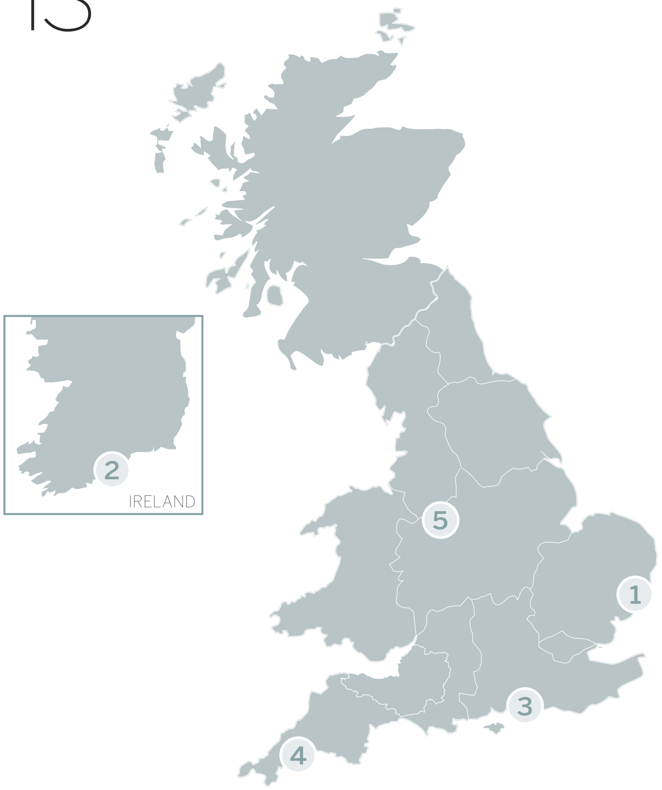
Kitchen Gardens

Be inspired to create your own, or simply marvel at the history and beauty of a functioning kitchen garden.



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2. BALLYMALOE COOKERY SCHOOL

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ADDRESS **Shanagarry, Co. Cork, Ireland**
TEL **+353 21 4646785** WEBSITE **www.cookingisfun.ie**

3. WEST DEAN GARDENS

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Spring Gardens

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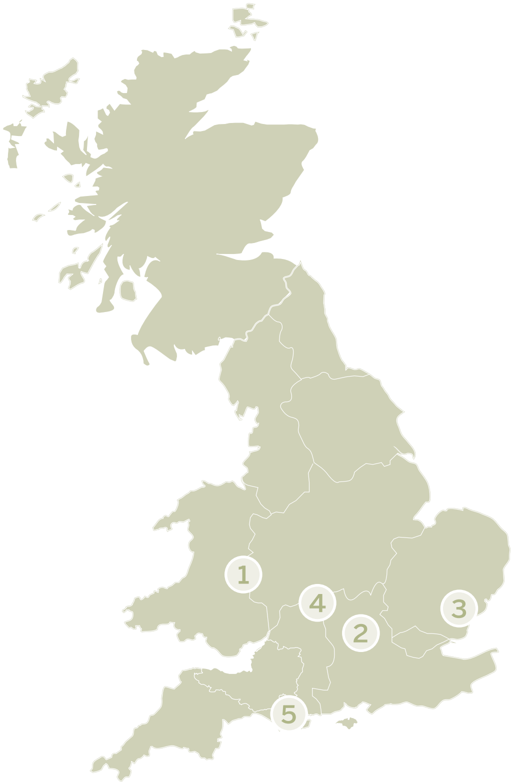

1. HERGEST CROFT GARDENS

Spring is a magical time at Hergest Croft. Spring flowers carpet the old apple avenue. There are drifts of naturalised bulbs all through the garden and the woodland is ablaze with rhododendrons, azaleas, camellias and magnolias. The pocket-handkerchief tree, the largest in Britain is a spectacular sight in early May.

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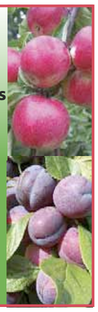

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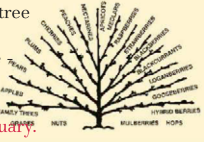

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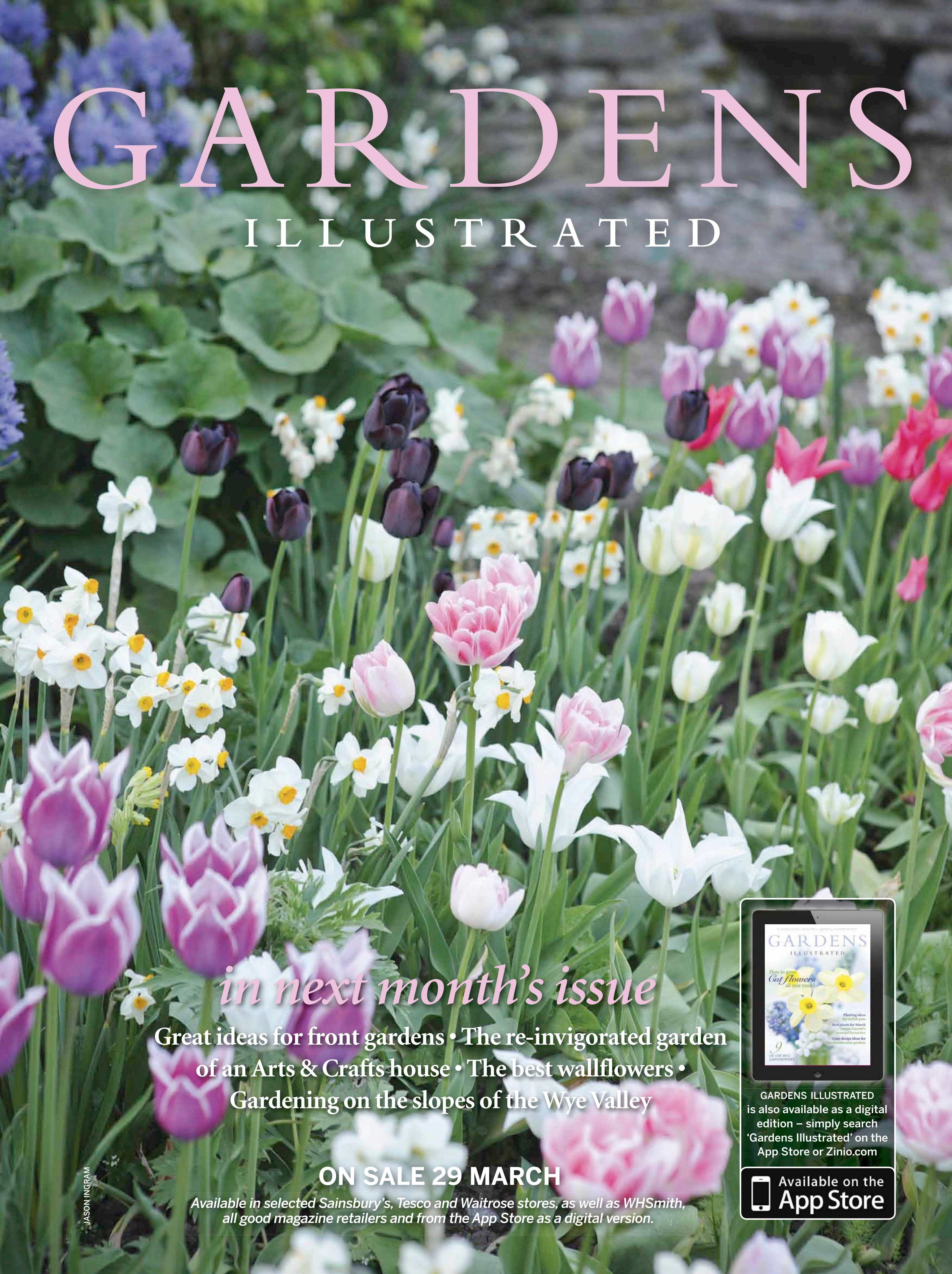

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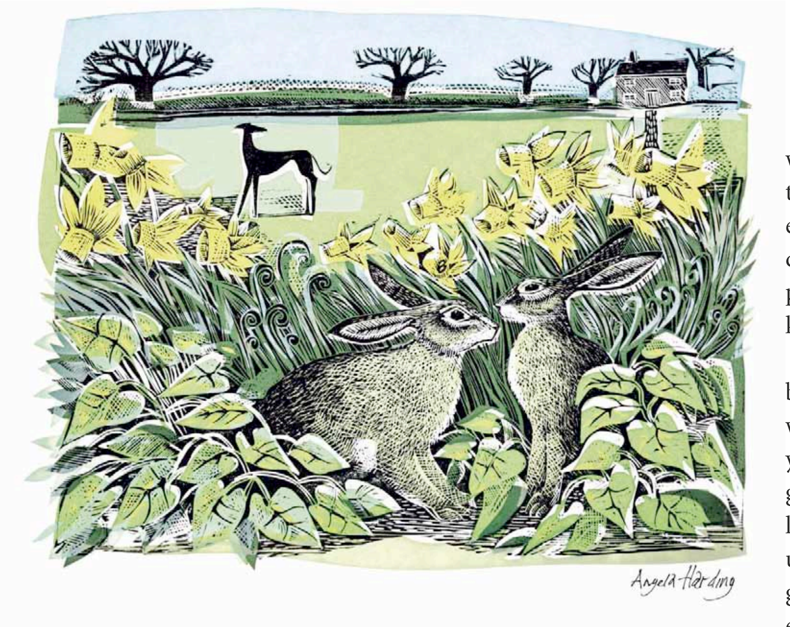
JASON INGRAM

Clearing the grid

In which a casual snip here and there becomes a serious shearing session

WORDS **FRANK RONAN** ILLUSTRATION **ANGELA HARDING**



It is shearing time for the plants that do not oblige us by shedding their own fleece. The beginning of the month will not be too early, but the end of it will almost certainly be too late. Evergreen epimediums most urgently spring to mind. A colony of the golden *Epimedium pinnatum* subsp. *colchicum* is visible from my place at the dining table, making it unlikely to be forgotten, and a good starting point for a snipping foray. A dry morning and I can be on my knees in two strides.

"Clearing up becomes a mania and it is worth remembering why you are doing it"

Next, a straggle of Siberian irises runs off close enough to be an obvious reminder that I am just in time to hack them down without doing much damage to new growth, already sharp and vibrant among the dun remains. The irises, in turn, are so widely distributed through the garden in their varieties that the project of getting round them all will take me within reminding distance of whatever else needs to be relieved of shag to make way for sprouting.

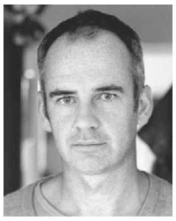
Ferns are easily tidied while the next fronds are still tight-curled. Hellebores should have been denuded weeks ago, well in advance of any possibility of geriatric leaves undermining the beauty of new flowers, but now is better than never, and even if you were conscientious in good time there will almost certainly be a few you missed back when the days were shorter and the end of winter more a matter of faith than certainty.

With bone hardy plants there is no hesitation in shearing to the ground. Others make us doubtful. Kniphofias are a cause for worry, but their wayward, straggling, greasy leaves are intruding where the Brazen Hussies and the blue anemones want to come. I start by thinking of only taking away the minimum and leaving plenty to protect the crowns of the pokers, but then I get carried away and do the job properly. One day I'll regret it. *Woodwardia fimbriata* does not need to be cleared so urgently, but my fingers itch to defrond it while I'm near. It is several times hardier than anyone ever expected, but I really don't want to find out the point at which it can be killed by clout-casting.

Clearing up quickly becomes a mania and it is worth remembering why you are doing it instead of going through the garden like a game of battleships until every square in the grid is cleared. The epimediums, our starting point, are perhaps the best illustration. *E. pinnatum* is promoted as a ground cover plant and if you left it to its own devices you might think that covering the ground was all it was capable of. The flowers don't strain themselves to get above the old leaves, and the new leaves, which are exquisite in themselves, marbled, veined and downy, cannot be noticed while they are overshadowed by their elders.

Exposing the naked flowers and expecting an *Epimedium* to perform undressed is a cruel test. Were you careless in your choice you might be disappointed. Other forms of *E. pinnatum*, I am told, might as well keep their clothes on. I was instructed a long time ago by my betters to plant the subspecies *colchicum* and have never regretted it, nor thought the annual stripping a waste of time. Erect racemes of a solid, soft yellow appear, lighting an otherwise missable spot beneath the lilac. That it is my only epimedium might indicate some kind of complacency, but are epimediums the sort of thing you really need more than one of, if the one you have is good enough?

Don't be misled by *colchicum* in the title. The flowers are what you would expect of a member of the barberry family and bear no resemblance to the great trumpets of autumn. The subspecies comes from Colchis, the land to the east of the Black Sea, much of which is now Georgia, from where Medea fled with Jason, and where the Golden Fleece was shorn from Chrysomallus. □



Frank Ronan is a novelist who lives and gardens in Worcestershire

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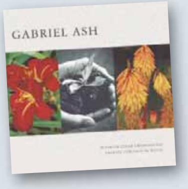

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